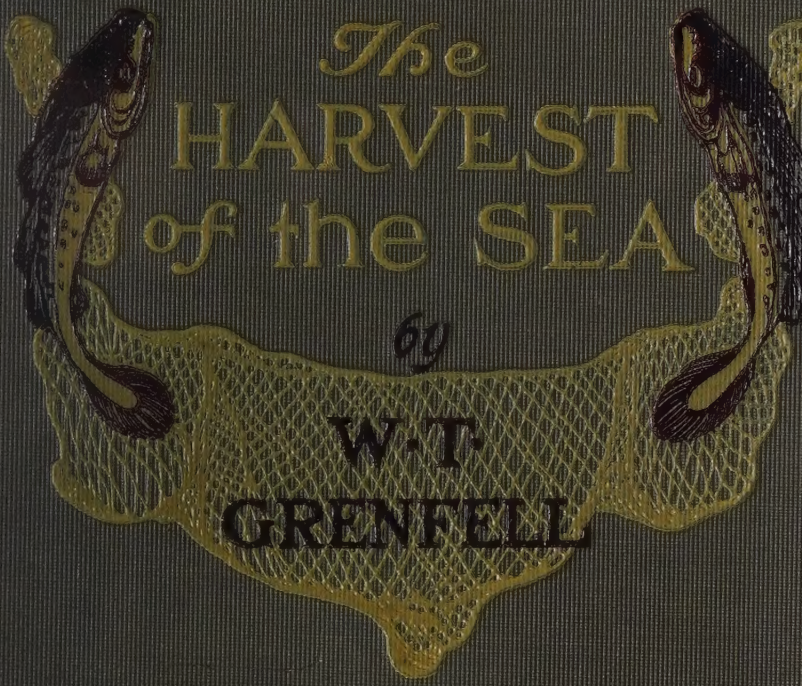
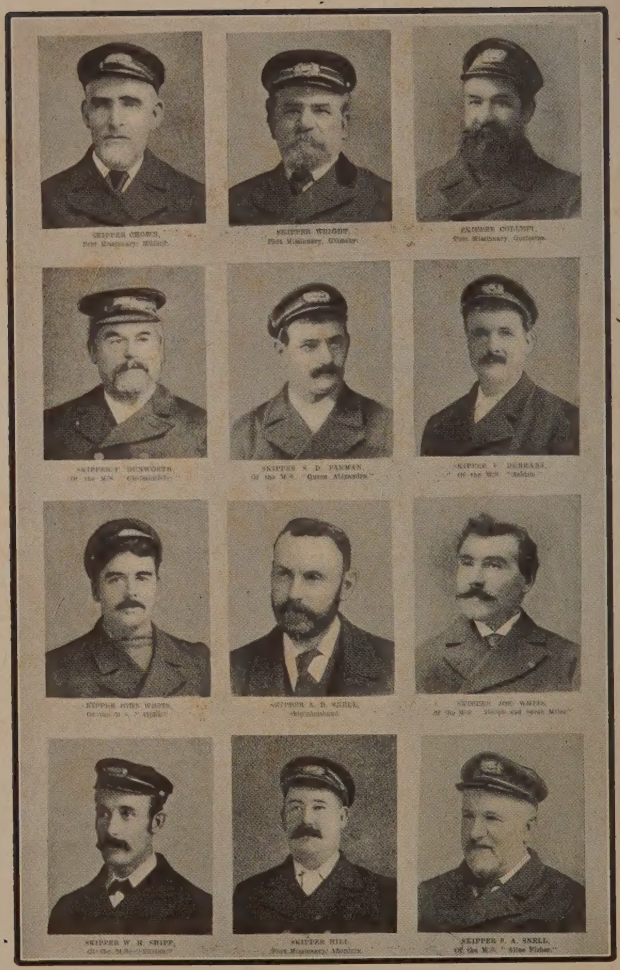

The
HARVEST
of the SEA
by
W·T·
GRENFELL

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THE HARVEST OF THE SEA



SOME REAPERS OF THE HARVEST

THE HARVEST OF THE SEA

A TALE OF BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC

By
Wilfred T. Grenfell,
Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, etc., etc.

ILLUSTRATED



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INTRODUCTION

EVERY one takes an interest in the sea rovers of old. No boy but is thrilled by the stories of Drake and Hawkins, of Franklin, Frobisher and John Paul Jones. Stories of heroic courage and indomitable energy still inspire us with a longing to lead nobler lives ourselves, and though in all ages the hardest battles have had to be fought in other spheres than the physical, yet in this twentieth century, when from childhood to the grave so many breathe an atmosphere of enervation, thank God we still love and admire anything that suggests to us the same great qualities that nerved those heroes of old!

They are other motives that in these days actuate the Toilers of the Deep to fight again in small vessels the same fight with the mighty elements, far off upon the seas, while we in the gales of winter enjoy the warmth and shelter of our homes on the land. Yet can we think that the motive, which is to provide for wives and children the blessings of the land, is less noble, because it involves the humble calling of the

fisherman, than if it meant the shedding of blood, perhaps for reasons no loftier than greed for gold or desire for the praise of men?

For over twenty years I have lived among the deep-sea fishermen on both sides of the Atlantic, and I can safely challenge any man to say that they are unworthy representatives of an ancestry we love to boast of. The same courage, even unto death, I have seen exhibited again and again, and that where no other spur to action existed than the imperious conscience of a brave sailor. No reward was looked for, no mead of praise obtained. Yet I have seen men go to save a human life, where heroes might have feared to follow; for more than once it meant passing, alone and unobserved, into the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

My story aims to give some idea of the lives we live, and how these marvellous things were done for us. It is an attempt to describe a social revolution, and the going forth to us, in our homes at sea, of the old, old story, with the same power as in ages past. I have thought it wise to have two of my fishermen friends tell the story of this transformation.

WILFRED GRENFELL.

THE HARVEST of THE SEA

I

I am APPRENTICED to The FISHERIES

EXACTLY where I first saw the light I do not know. I suppose it must have been in a more or less comfortable home. My father, I believe, was a master carpenter, and as such should have earned wages enough to keep the family in moderate comfort at least. But drink and bad company proved his and our ruin, as it has many another's, and long before I knew my right hand from my left, he had disappeared and left us to live or die as Fate determined.

Faint recollections of a dingy garret of which we rented one corner rise in my memory at times; and then I recall the neighbours' taking away our mother, and things being even worse than before, because she never came back. Poor mother! all she left behind her was Tom and Jessie and me. Tom was six years older than I,

and on him devolved the task of feeding us. But it was the kindness of neighbours that really kept us from starvation in the corner of that old garret where we still lived. I remember the poor heap of straw that served us as a bed as well as if it were yesterday, and the horrible cold draught that swept under the rickety door and made straight for our corner, and often kept us so cold that, huddled up as we were into a living ball, we were still unable to gain the blissful forgetfulness of sleep. I soon learnt to earn a few odd coppers by turning summersaults beside the tramcars that plied along the crowded street. Many a time I nearly choked myself by having to carry my earnings in my mouth, my ragged garments being innocent of sound pockets. So hungry have I been, when luck was bad, that I would follow the carts as they went to the great sugar refinery in Whitechapel, and lick the drippings from the empty puncheons.

One night I was awakened by a bright light in my face, and a great man in blue clothes turning me roughly over.

"What's your name, youngster?" he asked.

"I don't know," I answered; "Jess calls me Billy."

He talked a long time with some of our fellow lodgers, and then told me to come along, and he would send for Jess later on. I never saw Jess again. They told me they had put her in an orphanage, and I believe she was sent to Canada later on. Next day they took me to a great room, crowded with people. Tom was there, between two policemen. They said he had stolen some fruit from one of those greengrocers' stalls that stand out on the sidewalk. If he had, I don't think it was so bad as the judge made out, for I know he had the pain of hunger in his stomach often enough. They said, however, it was time to make an "example," so Tom was sent to a reformatory ship. Two or three days later I was bundled into the train with three other boys about my own age, and taken to Grimsby, that great centre of the fishing trade, to be apprenticed to the fisheries. From the station I was taken to my future master's house, and was there bound apprentice to him. He was to feed and clothe me, and to treat me well. He was also to allow me a little pocket money,—and little enough it proved to be. In return, I was to serve him for seven years in any way he liked.

What a change from our old garret! Here

ROLLINS COLLEGE LIBRARY

we were well fed and warmly clothed, for our master's wife was a mother to us boys. There were twelve of us, all told, learning to be deep sea fishermen ; but we were never all in from sea at one time. I think my apprenticeship would have been happy enough, while I was ashore, but one of the bigger boys was a cowardly bully, and while I was young and weak, I was one of his favourite victims. Many were the torments he inflicted on me. One of them rises to my memory still, owing to a strange coincidence that happened many years after. One day with two or three of his gang he had smuggled home some cheap and fiery gin from a saloon near the dock gates. They meant to make me drunk on it, and then to use me as they liked. As I refused to drink it, however, they held me on the ground, while they poured it down my throat. They fairly soaked me in the stuff, making me hate it so that it was years before I touched it again. What stamped it so on my memory was that some years later, when I was skipper of my own ship, and God had given me a comfortable home of my own, a poor miserable wretch came up to me one day in the street, and asked me to give him enough to get a drink, " for old times'

sake." It proved to be my old fellow prentice, a broken man already, with the stamp of the drunkard all over him. Thank God I was able to do better than that for him, though nothing could wipe from his slate the record of those evil years. But I am anticipating.

Before long I was shipped as cabin boy on the fishing smack *Heroine*. She was a sixty-ton ketch, carrying, like all the others, five hands, and was bound for that great submerged sandbank, called the "Dogger." Here we were to fish, without seeing the land, for a minimum period of two months. Indeed, our owner only expected us to return when the ship had to be refitted and restocked. What a wild, rough, cruel life it was to us boys at sea! I shudder even now as I look back on the first two years of it. For if cruelty to children is bad ashore, it is ten times worse at sea. A boy could with impunity be done even to death, and more than one was, being then dropped over the side, and reported simply as "washed overboard." I remember one lad well. He certainly was a dirty fellow, though probably no one had ever taught him better. Like all of us lads, he was supposed to keep the cabin clean, as well as to cook the

food. He was a poor, puny, pale-faced chap when he arrived, and he never got over his first sea-sickness. So it was pretty hard on the men, who were working hard day and night and wanted all the food they could get. It so happened too our skipper was a hard drinker, and when in his cups a dangerous man to cross. At times he beat the boy badly, though never without *some* provocation, however slight. That only seemed to make him worse, however, and more untidy and dirty and careless. At last one day the skipper put him below the ballast deck. It was pitch dark down there, and the bilge water swashing about, wetted and froze the poor little chap. He was only down an hour or so at a time, but the skipper saw how he feared it, and once he left him there all day and night. The boy was scarcely alive when they hauled him out, and the men were badly frightened and did all they could for him, but he died two days later. His body was in such a state they dared not take it home, so they tied some rocks to his feet and threw him into the sea. He was put down on the log as "fallen overboard."

Though we were out of sight of land, we did not live exactly alone, for there were ninety to a



"OUR FLEET WAS CALLED THE RED-WHITE"

hundred other fishing smacks similar to our own, altogether forming a fleet. Our fleet was called the "Red-White," from its flag; others were called the "Red Cross," the "Short Blues," and so on. The men themselves called our fleet the "Rashers," because our flag was like a piece of bacon. Each fleet had an admiral and a vice-admiral.

As I have been one myself, on and off, these twenty years, I will only say that the admiral is supposed to be a good man to get the fleet out of difficulties, when the weather is bad or other danger threatens. He is obliged to know the fishing grounds well, and to manœuvre the vessels under his charge so that they will always catch plenty of fish. If the fleet does badly, there is no end of grumbling, and if it continues, the admiral will soon be turned out of his billet. During the day the admiral signals to his fleet by flags; he carries a broad flag to distinguish his vessel. At night he uses a code of rockets.

Every morning one vessel, called the "carrier," takes to market all the fish the fleet has caught. Nowadays all the carriers are steamers, and about six of them are attached to each fleet. "Boarding the fish," as we call it, is the most

dangerous part of the work. The fish are packed in large boxes, and these are carried to the steamer in the small boats. On very rough mornings, some of the most thoughtful skippers would not make the crew get the small boat out, as lives were often lost in the rush and tumble, when heavy-laden boats were knocking into one another, as they lay wallowing in the trough of the sea. Such days meant great chances for the more reckless men, for the markets would be less well stocked, and therefore the price of fish much better. But we lads had to go if we were told, and so we used to make the best of it, and not let any one see we were afraid. Indeed, to do us justice, we soon learnt not to fear anything, and would go as readily when it almost meant death to go, as if it were the finest weather. The truth was, we scarcely valued our own lives at all, and much less any one else's.

I shall never forget my first upset. It was one New Year's day and Sunday morning, blowing hard, and a nasty northeasterly lump heaving in. We had just got our fish out and were clearing away from the steamer's side, when a cross sea rose under our counter. The boat stood on her

head for a minute, and then fell over, catching me like a mouse in a trap. I suddenly found that I was under the boat in complete darkness, with my arm over one of the seats. I knew I must try and get out, or perish in a few minutes; so, although I couldn't swim a yard, I caught hold of the gunwale, dragged myself under water, and somehow managed to climb up onto the keel. Only Archie, our third hand, was there. Sam had never got a hold, and was dead by then probably. The driving spray kept us from seeing to windward, the only way help could come; and already we were nearly dead with cold. We were just giving up hope, when I caught sight of a smack "heaving to" in the wind, right ahead of us, and I knew some one was going to try for us. Archie was now lying with his head down, and though I kept singing out to him, "For God's sake, keep up a little longer!" he let go, and I had to grip him as he washed past me.

That knocked me off, too, and I don't know what happened afterwards, till I woke up in the steamer's cabin, where some of the men had rolled the water out of me and life back into me.

Poor Archie was dead, though they had picked him up, too. They told me I had a grip of his jumper like a steel vice. Four men lost their lives alongside that morning. *But our fish fetched a splendid price.*

That was the first time I had to go home with the flag half-mast.

II

A CHANGE of BERTH

I HAD sailed in the *Heroine* for two years, when she ended her days by catching fire one night when all hands were on deck hauling the gear. When the gear was to be hauled, even the cook boy had to lend a hand; and I, as the youngest and greenest of the crew, of course held that post. My job was to go down in the dark hold and coil the great warp in its pound as it came winding in. As I had to catch it above my head, the streaming water used to run all over me, and I had to spend my hours of sleep more often wet than dry; for we always hauled at sundown and again at midnight. We used a hand capstan, in those days, and this meant that the crew had to walk round and round the upright, sometimes for three or four hours. It was no end of a job on a dirty night when there was a coating of ice on the rolling decks; for of course it was pitch dark, and we had to step over the rope as we came round to it. Even then I have known all the

rope to be shot out again by a sea striking us, just when we thought we had finished. Sometimes, too, the net itself would bring up fast in some rock or old wreck on the bottom. We dared not cut it adrift, for it was worth about four hundred dollars; so we would sometimes be heaving and tugging, and hauling and dragging at it for hours, only after all, perhaps, to save a few fathoms of torn rope and net. One calm day we actually hauled up, far enough to see the spars and yards, an old water-logged wreck that must have been on the bottom for years.

These long hours of extra work used sometimes to make the men so sleepy, that they would go fast asleep as they walked round the capstan. I remember one night our mate didn't answer when the skipper spoke to him; so the skipper took up the hurricane lantern, and flashed it in his face. The mate took no notice, but went on walking round, and stepping over the rope every time he came to it. He was fast asleep all the time.

It was just such a night that we lost the *Heroine*. We were dead-beat. The men had all been on deck for some hours, when smoke came blowing forrard from the companion hatch. The

skipper rushed aft and tried to get below, but couldn't face the heat and smoke. He then took the axe, and tried to cut a hole through the decks, so as to heave water down that way. But it was all no good, and in a little while we had to take to the boat, losing every article of clothing, and everything else we possessed. It was terribly cold tossing about, wet as I was, in that boat in the dark. For it was full two hours before we managed to make a vessel with her gear down, and get aboard. The old *Heroine* made a noble show as she flared up. She burnt almost to the water-line before she sank, going down head first with a fearful plunge. The worst of the business, as far as I was concerned, was that I was placed in a new ship under a strange skipper. For the "old man," as we called him (he was about thirty-five), had been not unkind to us. He had "kiddies" of his own on the shore, and though he went now and again to the grog-ship, he generally got clear of her before dark. I think it must have been his wife that kept him straight. He certainly seemed to care about her, and we boys loved her, for she always had a kind welcome for us. We used to be allowed to go down to the house, and more than one supper

she gave us behind the "old man's" back, which kept me, at least, from many a worse place. She was religious, too, and went to a chapel down near the fish-dock. But I think I may say that I had in those days never heard the name of Christ, unless it were in an oath. Our master had no leanings that way—perhaps a good thing, as his life wouldn't have borne him out. There was no religion at sea.

I had grown into a good strong lad by then, and having from infancy had to fight all my own battles, I was able now to hold my own pretty well with any one. Well it was for me that it was so. For now I was to sail on a ship where I was to be with a drunken skipper, fearless alike of God or man. The life at sea had been, so far, the best that I had known, for at least I had always had enough to eat and drink. Though I know now what dangers I was passing through, I did not then regret having been sent to the fisheries.

I shipped this time as "fourth hand." The vessel's name was the *Ocean's Pride*. The cook, like myself, was a town waif sent to the fisheries as an apprentice. The skipper had once been admiral of our fleet, but had been turned out by



DRINK IS NOT THE FISHERMAN'S ONLY ENEMY

the owners for the losses that some of his drunken escapades had caused them. On one occasion he had sailed his fleet in under the little island of Heligoland. The set of men that were always aboard him at sea, went ashore to get liquor. The island had no end of opportunities for getting what they wanted. Soon, however, their senses and their money began to leave them, and the islanders wanted to get rid of them. It was no easy task, however. For as soon as they tried it on, the men showed fight, and very soon had the whole island at their mercy. They did what they liked then with the saloons, wallowing in drink, for the next two days; then we all cleared off to sea again. After that, only the crew of a single fishing vessel was allowed to land at one time. The admiral's last spree was to take the whole fleet right into the territorial waters under the coast of Holland, so that his gang again might go ashore and get grog. Not only were some of the vessels seized and towed into port for fishing in illegal waters, but some of the skippers stayed so long ashore that their mates went off and took their vessels home, leaving the skippers to get home as best they could, by passenger steamers or otherwise.

I need not say that all on board the smack were afraid of the "skipper," and his cruelty to the little cook, Charlie, was such that on our first time home, just as we were getting to sea again we found he had bolted and was nowhere to be found. His work fell on my shoulders, and though I did my best to give no cause for angering the skipper, many a blow and many a bucket of cold water were my portion before I turned in at night. Several times he made me stay on deck all night, when it was my time to be turned in, and that made him all the crankier the next day, because I was then unfit to do my work. When the voyage was up and we reached home, we found that his master had had Charlie sent to prison for breaking the apprenticeship laws, and when we next went to sea the poor lad was led down and put on board, so that he had no chance to escape. As for me, I should have escaped too, only I knew it was no good. I was half afraid the skipper meant to kill Charlie, and I had some sort of hope that I might be of use to him. It was no good going and telling our master about it: he would only have told the skipper, for he never would listen to anything against his skippers, so long as they did well

with fish. And our skipper was at least a good fisherman in that respect, for he would carry a whole sail when all the rest of the fleet had two reefs down, and so he managed to drag his net faster and further perhaps. Anyhow, there was nothing to say in that respect, as we made "good voyages."

The lust for money is as cruel as the craving for drink. One of the owners, I was told, actually threatened to sack his skipper, because he broke his fishing voyage to bring home a crew of unfortunate Dutchmen, that he had taken off a sinking schooner. There was a time, in Grimsby, when the prentice lads in the winter months spent more time in jail for deserting, than they did at sea.

When we left, the skipper came aboard drunk, with a "list aport," a thing we used to think meant bad luck. Once aboard, both the skipper and mate went below, and left us three youngsters to manage as best we could. After three days, during which we had not seen either of them on deck, we fell in with our fleet, and we had to go below and tell them so. Their liquor was gone now, and all they thought of was, "Is there a grog-ship with them?"

In those days there was always a vessel, or perhaps more than one, with every large fleet, selling liquor. She did no fishing, but just bought—or stole—everything she could, in return for fiery schnapps or adulterated brandies. The vessels were called "copers." We called them "Hells," and their liquor "chained lightning." They generally sailed from some port across the North Sea, where alcoholic liquors and tobacco are cheap.

III

The GROG-SHIP and ITS VICTIMS

THE scenes that used to take place on the grog-ships are better imagined than described. Those that frequented them used to act more like devils than men to one another and to us boys. Thus I remember Skipper Wakeman coming by his death. A number of the men were making an all-night spree of it, and some time before morning fell to quarrelling amongst themselves. One of them seized the lamp swinging in the coper's cabin and hurled it at Wakeman. The lamp broke, and the paraffin soaked into his woollen jersey, and in an instant he was a mass of flames. In his agony he rushed up the cabin stairs. For one moment he danced about on deck—an awful sight that none that saw it will ever forget; then, rushing to the side, he flung himself into the water. I need hardly say none of his companions was in a condition to try and save him. And so the poor fellow went out into Eternity. In some

such way many a good man lost his life in my early days.

Hateful as these ships were to me, however, I was eager enough to see one now, for both skipper and mate would at least be off board for a short while, and Charlie and I could forget our miseries.

The fleet was fishing at this time on the rising ground near the coast of Denmark. They were all doing well, and there was no lack of grog-vessels about, so we soon saw the backs of our chief officers. The mate came aboard next day, and did not leave us again, for without him we could not have handled the ship and done the fishing. But the skipper we hardly saw again for a fortnight, except when he came off to get some fish to sell for grog, or later when he sold our spare gear, some of the sails, and a quantity of the ship's provisions. He couldn't possibly have drunk all he paid for, but he was in a half-dazed condition all the time, and I don't think he knew just what he was doing.

One day, at sundown, we saw a smack's boat adrift on the ocean, apparently with no one in her, so we bore down to pick her up. Picture our surprise when we found our own skipper

stretched out in the bottom in a drunken sleep! When he came to himself, next day, he found he had been dumped in and cut adrift, as there was nothing more to be got out of him.

The question now was what to do with our vessel. We must go home for fresh supplies, or get them from our comrades in other vessels. The first the skipper did not dare to do, for fear of arrest; the second he was either too proud to do, or too maddened to think of, for there is no doubt he would have got all he wanted. But in his disordered state of mind, all he thought of was to lose the ship, and he swore, over and over again, that she should never more see Great Grimsby.

We took no more notice of this than we did of any other of his drunken oaths. But the same night, when the admiral signalled to shoot the nets, the skipper put the helm hard up, and we left the fleet with a fair wind for home. It was late the following night, when the skipper himself was at the wheel and had let all hands go below, that we were almost thrown out of our bunks by the smack suddenly running up on a reef. Breaking seas hit the vessel as she lay, driving her up farther and farther on the rocks,

and we soon saw that she must go to pieces. The skipper was like a fiend, yelling and shouting in delirious joy. But his mad triumph was short-lived, for a curling sea coming in over the rail swept him overboard, and his laughter was lost in the noise of the sea, and the darkness. All the sailor qualities of the mate now came into play. He made us lash spars together to form a raft, himself directing matters as if he had been in the dock at home.

Right above us towered the gleaming light that marked the reef, which we now knew to be Borkum Reef, off the north coast of Holland. In spite of the furious seas, the stout old *Ocean's Pride* held together long enough to let us finish our work, and then we were all lashed on. In God's mercy our lives were thus spared, and the drink demon cheated of further victims.

We were sent home by the British consul as "shipwrecked mariners." But the story leaked out in time to save the owner from claiming the insurance, the skipper having long been hall-marked as unfit to trust a vessel to. Thus poor Charlie was saved from his tormentor, and was partly avenged on a money-blinded master.

IV

A HERO of The FISHING FLEET

I DO not intend to trouble you with all my own story: wearisome enough it would prove to you, I fear; but I want to put down just those incidents that will show what the deep sea men were and are. Alas, I was none too good a specimen! Having no one to teach me better, I fell into evil ways. What saved me more than anything else, perhaps, was a pride in my own manhood and strength, and a determination to rise if I could. Like most young fishermen, I soon began to "walk out" with a girl, —one who now for twenty-five years has been the partner of my joys and sorrows. A mighty help she proved to me then, for she promised to become my wife as soon as I had a vessel of my own, but not before, and not then either, unless I kept clear of drink and bad ways. How many a young fellow have I seen rush into marriage without ever recognizing its responsibilities! It has been the girl's own fault, often enough, that she has not kept the love of her sailor husband,

because from the first she has never taught him rightly to respect her.

During these years I was in the good smack *Osprey*, with Skipper "Darkie Jim," with whom I rose to be mate. He was a great, powerful fellow, as hard as iron, yet as gentle as he was strong, with a hearty way with him that made us all cheer up, however black things might look. He was a bit reckless at times, though. Once I saw him drive his fist straight through the panels of the cabin door, just because a number of skippers, who were there to share some fresh mutton he had received from home, said he couldn't do it. On another occasion I saw him catch by the seat of his trousers and the scruff of his neck, a man who had gone too far in teasing him, lift him above his own head, and throw him over into the sea as he might have tossed a kitten. It was a fine day, and we all set to work and fished him out again; but he drank more water in those few moments than he had drunk for many a long day.

Darkie Jim's irrepressible spirits led him into innumerable mad frolics, but he was far too brave to be a bully, and our crew almost worshipped him. True, he had little religion in the early

days, but he had a great and loyal love for his "Old Dutcheye," as he called his wife, and for his children, who were affectionately referred to as "Toe-biters."

On one occasion our fleet was fishing on the shallow ground that stretches away off the "Sylt." Fish were plentiful then on the sandy ground there, but it was a big risk for so many vessels to go so far back in shallow water in a bight like that. We were in all a hundred and thirty sail, yet we had such complete trust in the capability of our admiral, and were so keen on getting more fish than any one else, that in we all went. Our skipper ventured in the farthest of all, as he always did, without thought of consequences. We made a big haul that day, right in sight of the land. At sundown the wind was still off shore, and only a nice fresh fishing breeze at that. So the admiral showed his lights for a first night haul over the same ground, and we crept in even nearer under the shore. The wind freshened before midnight into a two-reef breeze, and some of the more cautious men hauled their nets and made a good offing for themselves. Not so our skipper. He was cheerily singing away in one of his reckless moods, and the little *Osprey* went flying

along, her lea rail almost under water, but with never an inch of canvas shortened, for she was gathering the haddocks up into her net in a way that meant more comforts for the " Toe-biters."

Suddenly the wind chopped right round onto the land. Rockets at once flashed up into the sky, telling the fleet to haul at once, and make for the open. The leemost vessels were ten miles from the admiral, however, and long before they got their nets on board a very nasty sea was running. For it took us a long while to haul, in those days, and a sea makes very quickly in shallow water. Our big catch now nearly proved our ruin, for Darkie Jim never lost a haddock that he could possibly save, and it took us full two hours to heave nearly three tons of fish aboard. There were no lights in sight when we started to beat to windward, for we learnt afterwards that the skippers of no less than forty vessels had chopped away their valuable gear to save time, and perhaps their vessels and crews. Not so " Darkie Jim " : he wasn't built that way. But that is the only reason that, in spite of his gigantic strength and coolness, we were the last vessel to start into the wind's eye that night. After what seemed to me ages, we were at last

all ready, and the bow-line was loosed, and away tore our staunch little craft.

It was pitch dark now, and we could neither see when we must tack nor tell if we were gaining or losing ground. To help the vessel do herself justice in that confined space, the skipper held on each way, till even down below we could hear the breakers on the land roaring above the howling of the storm. Having ordered all hands below, the skipper himself remained on deck, lashed to the wheel. Only at the moment we were head on to sea, at the tacks, were we allowed to rush forward and change over the sails. We hadn't shortened an inch of canvas, and now we could not if we wished to. Luckily our topsails had blown to rags and eased us a little, for the wind kept freshening. Of course we had all the driving power we could handle, and the only marvel was that none of the huge seas hit us, or came aboard. How many hundreds must just have missed us, I don't know. Now and again the tail end of a spiteful one that had missed us by not more than a yard or so, would drop a ton of water over our rail as it swung by, wash down the cabin stairway, and give us a foot of water on the floor to show us what it could have done,

if only it had hit us fair and square. But these things only served to make the skipper more cheery, and as he sang out, "All right below, boys?" he always added one of his quaint bits of talk to the sea, chaffing it as if it was alive and could understand him.

Hour after hour went by, the skipper still at the wheel, nursing the ship he loved so as to save every inch of ground, and dodging the seas rather by instinct than by sight, for morning seemed to be endlessly delayed. Like all good things, however, it came to those who waited, and we could make out that owing to the necessity of nursing the ship from the breaking seas, we had put very little distance yet between us and the breakers under our lea. The skipper seemed as fresh as paint still, prattling to the ship as if it were one of his own "Toe-biters," encouraging her and praising her whenever she escaped a sea by a hair's breadth.

Suddenly he sang out, "Come and take the wheel, Bill. There is some poor devil to wind'ard clean swept. I'll go aloft and try to make him out."

I was at the wheel in a second, for you may be sure no one had his boots off that night. The

skipper went aloft, and as we rose and fell over the seas, I could see him straining his eyes through the driving spume. At last he came aft again, clawing his way, like a great crab, by the life-line he had rigged.

"It's the *Sarah and Anne*," he roared. "She's clean swep'. The men are still on deck, and they've got a bit o' buntin' on the mast stump. Skipper Jack's got kids ashore. We must make a try for them."

"You don't mean you are going to try and get the boat out, do you?"

"Here, take the wheel," he fairly shouted at me. "There's no time to waste. Don't leave the wheel, yourself, Bill, and for God's sake watch her. I'll go below and get some one to come with me. All hands on deck!" he bawled, and almost as soon as he spoke the three others came tumbling up from below.

"What? get the boat out in a sea like this? Why, there ain't no chance whatever."

We were all certain of that, and thought it simply madness to suggest it.

"I'd go with you anywheres, skipper," said Tom, our third hand, "if there was the leastest scrap of a chance. But a life-boat wouldn't live

in *that* sea, and besides we could never get her out anyhow."

"Forrard and get the gripes loose," he shouted. "Bill, old lad, heave her to, and have an eye to the boat as long as you can. Take the ship home if I don't come back. I'll go alone, if no one will come."

In next to no time the boat was on the rail, and almost as quickly she was flying down the deck before a lumping sea, her bilge stove in as she struck the capstan with a heavy thud.

"Quick, boys! that old paraffin tin and some spun-yarn," he shouted; and almost before we knew it, she was on the rail again, a great patch of tin, oakum, canvas and tarry spun-yarn over the hole.

"Now!" he roared; and then a sea shot her out like an arrow, taut to the end of the stout bass painter, and in a moment she was hammering into our lea quarter and the skipper was in, his jack-knife open in his teeth; and the next, the painter cut, he was only a speck visible as his boat rose on the crest of a larger wave than usual. But not before Tom had tumbled into the boat with him.

"I didn't expect to see you any more, Bill,"

he told me afterwards, "but I couldn't stay and see the old man go alone."

The very first sea they met swept away both their oars like so much matchwood, and all Tom can remember is that he and the skipper set to work bailing for their lives with their sou'westers, for the same sea had more than half filled the boat. Tom never thought a moment about the *Sarah and Anne*. He never had thought they had any chance of reaching her, anyhow, so he forgot all about everything but getting the water out, till suddenly a sea flung them alongside something like a sunken rock. Somehow the water in the bottom of the boat was alive with half a dozen men, and then once more they were clear again, and working away at the water as before. You must know we never row our small boats to windward, even when boarding fish in fine weather: we always run down to them after they have drifted past the fish carrier, and pick them up.

Though I had sent our deckie to the cross-trees the moment the boat left, we had lost sight of both her and the wreck almost immediately, and had seen nothing since. What should I do? Run to leeward on a fool's errand and so lose all

the ground we had fought so hard for all night, or accept the inevitable and let the story of one more fisherman's self-sacrifice be forgotten, except in the desolate little home to which we could carry nothing but a flag half-mast? "Mind you take her home safe if you can," had been almost the skipper's last words. For the ship was his own, the one result of his life's labours, and all that there would be left to provide for his loved ones. Our cook lad, only fifteen years of age, was eager to risk everything for the skipper's life; for the man had been a father to him. It looked like running into the very gates of hell, as we looked at the mass of white foam behind us, and the pitiless headlands on each side of us, now plainly visible. We seemed caught like a rat in a trap.

Thank God we tried it. While I sent the lad forward to loose the sheets, I was watching a chance to let her pay off without being caught in the trough of the sea. At last we were round, and on we flew before the gale, till it seemed certain that to go any further meant striking the sands. I was about to "heave to" again and have one more struggle to save the ship, when the deckie began waving frantically over our starboard bow. He

swung down the throat halyards in half a moment, and as I wrenched at the tiller lanyards with every ounce of strength I had, to give her a port helm, I heard him yelling, "The boat! the boat!" He ran forward with the log line, and stood waiting as the good old *Osprey* shot up into the wind once more. There was suddenly a loud crash. It was the boat pounding itself to pieces against our counter; and then I saw eight figures sprawling on our deck.

I have often noticed, when the storm seems to have done its worst and has been beaten, it suddenly goes down. So it was on this occasion. A very slight change in the wind's direction gave us just what we needed, so that on our very next tack we were able to head up, till we cleared the Southern Head, and forty-eight hours later we were abreast of dear Old Flamborough light.

Such things were done, and soon forgotten, by men that neither expected nor received reward or praise for their noble deeds. Their only spur was the generous impulse of their own big hearts, and their real mead the fact that they proved themselves worthy of the traditions of the sailor.

V

The SEA CLAIMS "DARKIE JIM"

THOUGH the purpose of this story does not involve Skipper Darkie Jim any further—since I left soon after to take charge of my first vessel, the *Silver Spray*—yet I must tell how the greedy sea at length claimed him too as its victim. This chapter of the ever-lengthening tale of tribute included in the "price of fish," I had from the lips of the deckie, "Ernie," who was still with him at the time. It was on the 14th of October, two years later. The fleet was away down North, fishing well below the "tail end o' the Dogger." It had been dark and dirty all day, and though we carried no barometer, we knew we were in for something worse than usual. We were sure of it, when at sundown the admiral signalled for the fleet to heave to on the starboard tack, and not to put out the nets for fishing.

There was a dead calm for a few minutes; I had just gone below at six o'clock for a mug of

tea. We had reefed the *Silver Spray* down all snug, clewed down the hatches, and made all ready, lashing the helm and hauling the bowline well home on our storm staysail. As I took up my mug, a clap of thunder boomed out overhead, and a splatter or two of rain fell on deck. Then there was a rustle, increasing to a roar, and a whole gale of wind hit the ship like a sledge-hammer. Every timber in her shivered like an aspen, as she fell over almost on her beam ends, flinging every movable thing into the lee bunks. Then she seemed to be in doubt for a moment what to do, but at last slowly righted herself, and went staggering away like a drunken man. It was dark as ink, but as our vessels had all put good sea room between one another, there was nothing to do now but to set the watch and turn in and sleep as usual, for it is always well in a fisherman's life to put in sleep when you get a chance: more than once have I nearly died from the need of a nap.

That night I happened to go on deck at midnight to see that all was right, when suddenly I noticed a green light now and again bobbing up under our lee quarter. I knew at once that there was some one coming the opposite way. The

wind was so heavy, and the driving spray so cold, it was almost impossible to make anything out; but I guessed at once it was another fleet crossing through us on the other tack. To understand what this meant on such a night, you must understand that no one is steering any of the vessels. It would be folly to attempt to do so, for we have such a low free-board that a sea may sweep the deck at any moment, and as a matter of fact we always lash the tiller hard-a-lee, and the vessel keeps on dodging up head to sea of herself, while the watchman stands or crouches in the companion hatch, ready to jump below at a moment's notice.

So there was nothing to be done, and our one hundred and thirty vessels had to thread their way through over a hundred coming the opposite way, and just take their chance of going free or being suddenly hurled into eternity. Twice we were within an ace of being cut down, and twice we missed another poor fellow by a hair's breadth. It sent a queer kind of feeling through you, as all of a sudden you saw death, in the form of a huge black phantom with great red and green eyes, loom up out of that Egyptian darkness, flit past within a few feet of you, and



"WITHIN AN ACE OF BEING CUT DOWN"

as suddenly disappear into the night again. Alas, they did not all fare as well as we did, and many a brave soul went out into the darkness that night.

When at length daylight came, things were no better, for the wind kept veering against us, and was slowly but surely driving the fleet into the breakers of the shallow water on the bank. Some of the vessels tried to spread more canvas to weather the shoals, or to gather way enough to tack; but canvas went like paper in that furious storm, and by midday it was evident we should have to try and cross the shoals. It had not gone twelve before the boom of the admiral's gun-rockets told the fleet that the best thing to do was to hard up and try to run over the breakers into the quieter and deeper water on the south side the bank. None of us but knew that these rockets sounded the death knell for some of us; for the mountainous seas rise perpendicularly, and fall over, crushing with their awful weight anything that may come in their way. There were five fathoms of water in the shallowest place, however, and there was not much danger of actually striking bottom. As I write I can live over again that half-hour, when we hung on

and hung on to the last moment, before going below to snatch what might be our last meal, in silence. The mate and I then lashed ourselves to the wheel, while the third and fourth hands let go the sheets, and then ran back to the companion to wait events. The little *Silver Spray* paid off like a bird, shipped not one drop of water as she turned, and almost before we knew it, was scudding in ferocious leaps and bounds over mountains and troughs, till in less than an hour, to our own amazement, we found ourselves in comparative safety under the shelter of the bank.

Not so, however, the gallant *Osprey*. Ernie told me that during the first half-hour, they saw two smacks disappear close to them. One was so close that they saw her put her bowsprit right under water, stand for a moment on end, and then disappear with all on board. Indeed, so close were they to her, that they ran right over the top of her wreckage. But their own turn came at last. Just as he thought they were reaching the deeper water, he heard Skipper Jim, who had been working like a giant at the wheel to keep the vessel from yawing, shout, "Look out! Water!" He just had time to see a

mountain falling on them, and then himself fell head over heels down the stairway. Over and over the *Osprey* seemed to go, everything apparently being smashed to atoms. The very ballast broke through the flooring and fell on Ernie, knocking most of the life out of him, while tons of water rushed below sweeping everything fore and aft in a heap. But a fisherman fights to the end for his life, and as the water in the cabin, which more than half filled it, would have drowned him in a few minutes if he remained below, he had to try and crawl up on deck.

Up, did I say? Yes, up—for somehow the smack was still keel down. It was no easy matter to get on deck, for the stairs were broken, and the companion was gone. But the ruin below was nothing to the wilderness on deck. Not a stick was left standing abaft the stump of the mainmast. Mizzen, bulwarks, stanchions, hatches, capstan, wheel and trawl beam had all gone, and with them every vestige of the crew. Even the two boys, who had been with Ernie in the hatch, had gone with it. Marvellous to relate, as if by the special intervention of Providence on his behalf, the boat was still lashed in place by her stout

chain gripes. For the sea had struck the *Osprey* crosswise and partly missed her bows. True, some loose piece of wreckage had struck her, and badly cracked the boat's bilge. But, though her oars also were gone, Ernie saw here his only possible refuge. Getting to her with difficulty, he managed to stuff the crack with strips from his shirt. Then, however, it still seemed that all chance was gone, for he was quite unable alone to get her over the side. Hastily, however, he gathered everything he could find into her, climbed in, cut the lashings of the gripes, and waited for the end.

It was evident the *Osprey* could not keep afloat many minutes. She was already almost level with the water, which Ernie had noticed was much quieter. As a matter of fact, they must have been already well across the bank. He said it seemed to him years that he sat there, wondering what drowning felt like, but without any fear of it. Suddenly the unexpected happened. A rather heavier swell washed sullenly over the half submerged deck, and lifting the boat carried it away, right through where the rail and bulwarks had once stood. Ernie realized that he was safe from being sucked down, when the

Osprey should make her last obeisance to the waves. Hastily he strung together everything he had available that would float, and soon had a fair sea anchor out, his little craft riding head to sea, and making good weather of it. One more streak of luck (or shall we say overruling of Providence?): Ernie and his tiny craft were sighted and picked up before night by a vessel that, like our own, had safely crossed the bank.

It was a shattered remnant of a fleet that crowded into the Humber a few days later, and a terrible sight that met us as one by one the cripples straggled home. For twenty-five smacks were missing with all hands, and two hundred and seventy-two men had perished in one night, leaving a hundred widows to mourn their loss.

This also is the price of fish.

VI

The COMING of The GOSPEL

ODD as it may seem, though I was a skipper in charge of a vessel, my apprenticeship had still another year to run. And as every member of the crew was an apprentice also, it was a cheap ship to its owner, for none of us got regular pay, but only what he liked to give us, according to our articles. Another of the apprentices—my great chum, all these years —Tom Blake, was also a skipper, and so we always used to arrange to sail together and make our times at home tally, also. We used to be called the "Twins." When you saw one of us, you saw the other. Indeed, Tom was already engaged to my girl's sister, and when we got our papers back and were free to work for ourselves, we were both married on the same day. So we settled to live side by side in Grimsby, so that our wives should be company for one another when we were away at sea.

It was the custom then for the more pushing

men to mortgage a vessel from their owners, and call it their own, working it just as if it was. The owners supplied them with all they needed and charged them with it. As security they held the ship's papers, and stopped so much of the earnings as they liked, each year, to pay off the interest and a part of the capital. Thus they had no risk if a vessel didn't pay, for they foreclosed, and only the tradesmen weren't paid. The owner, too, insured against the vessel's being lost. If she did well, I know to my cost, my owner at least did not suffer. Not one in a hundred of the men who were thus working out their ships ever got to own them, for if it seemed that the owner was going to lose control of one, it was easy for him to insist on some new expense, such as new decks, or a new suit of sails. The admiral, as he earned more than the rest, had more chance. But as a rule when any man *did* get to own his ship, it was too old to be of any value. It was a fine thing, though, to be able to say the boat was one's own ; at least we used to think it so. It made you seem more independent, though you really were never your own master ; for you had to drag on, and drag on, year after year, while only the owner made anything out of it.

So Tom and I, now that we were free, each "owned" his own vessel. I had the *Wild Wave* and Tom had the *Rover*. They were charged to us at $8,000 and $7,000 respectively.

Those were rollicking days for us young fellows. Many a spree we had together; and to me Tom always seemed the life of the party, as he certainly was the leader on every occasion. Once the herring-men had been having great trouble with the Dutchmen, who used to sail along in the dark with a four-bladed knife hanging over their bow, called a "devil." By cutting the nets adrift, they did great damage and caused great loss. So one day, when we sighted a large Dutch drift-net vessel, Tom dressed himself up in an old policeman's uniform and went aboard. He told the skipper he was a customs-house officer, and had come to seize him for illegal fishing. Somehow he got the fellow properly frightened, and we had the fun of seeing the Dutchman following in Tom's wake all day, as if he were a prisoner of war. Eventually he made the fellow pay up some schnapps and all the tobacco and cigars he had aboard, in order that Tom should not say any more about it.

Another time we were both adrift from the



"A LOT OF FISH ON DECK"

fleet, and having a lot of fish on deck that we couldn't keep, we ran into Ostend to sell it. There was a lot of ill-feeling between the Dutchmen and our "single boaters," or men who fish apart from the fleets, for by running their fish into the Dutch ports, they lowered the price of Dutch fish. The morning that we came in, a great crowd of them collected on the quay and began stoning our vessels. A lot of their little soldiers were sent down to keep the peace, but the crowd nearly drove them into the water. Meanwhile Tom had collected his crew and made them put on their oil-frocks and sou'westers, to protect them from the stones, and black their faces; then taking their belts, buckle-end out, they sallied forth and drove a path through the whole lot, till they reached the fish-market. There they secured creels to put the fish in, and came back in triumph. They soon had their fish sold then, and ours too; and we got to sea again as quick as we could, having made a good venture by the visit. Indeed, nothing seemed to go wrong with us, and our luck became the talk of the fleet—though I am convinced a man makes his own luck, and the man who haunts the grog-shops is the one that complains the most of ill-luck.

News soon gets about, even at sea, and before long the owners were talking about my success. I hadn't heard of this, so I was mighty surprised, one time home, when I wasn't yet twenty-five years old, to get a letter from the owners offering me the *Flags*. My, but it was a proud moment when I first hoisted the broad flag of the Red-White fleet on my topmast stay, and when I saw my wife and Tom's on the pier head, waving to us, as we first put to sea with an admiral's sign of office floating aloft!

Every morning when it was possible to board fish, the carrier had to come to the admiral for orders, and we generally used to hold a skippers' meeting in the cabin to discuss the movements of the fish and how we should be likely to do the best with them. It sent quite a queer feeling through me as I sat there and told men who had been skippers while I was still in that old London garret, what they must do, and how I intended to take the fleet; for as long as I was admiral, I always had my way.

It was after one of these meetings one fine morning, when I had just come on deck, that I noticed a vessel ahead of us flying a red, white and blue flag, with a lot of letters on it. I am

ashamed to say I could not read them, so I called Tom and asked him what the letters spelt. There were three lines, and they ran like this:



"What's little Billy up to now?" I said. "What's he got to do with religion out here? I thought that was for the women-folk and those that stayed home."

"I don't know," said Tom. "Come along. Let's go and pay him a visit."

I was half afraid to go with Tom. I thought he would be sure to be up to some of his monkey tricks again, and little Billy Cullington was a splendid fellow, a favourite with every one; and after all it was no business of ours, if he had turned religious. However, there never was any saying "No," when Tom had made up his mind one should say "Yes." So along we went, half

expecting to find Billy with a face as long as a yard measure, and for all we knew a big pair of black gloves. We found him, however, as merry as a cricket, and all Tom's chaff and fooling couldn't put him out of temper. He told us he was a Christian now, had been "converted," and didn't intend to fish any more on Sundays, but was going to try and "keep prayers aboard, instead."

"Well, Billy," I said, "that may suit you all right, if you have a mind for it, but I guess the owners will want fish and not prayers."

The little chap made us stay to dinner, and as he was just from home and had supplies of "fresh," we made no objection. As we went away, though, Tom couldn't resist the fun of cutting away the leg of fresh mutton which was hanging over the stern, and giving a "mutton party" next day. He invited Billy also, not of course telling him where the mutton came from, but just to do his very best to tease the little chap into losing his temper. But it was all no good. Billy held his own all right, and when Sunday came and I gave the fleet the signal to "down trawl," blessed if little Billy didn't keep his foresail a'weather, and his precious "Bethel"

flag a-flying for prayers, just as if he was admiral on his own account.

It was soon the gossip of the whole fleet, and many were the bets on how long he would stick to it, what the owners would say, etc., though on the last point we were all pretty well agreed.

VII

DARK DAYS for The MISSIONER

WELL, Billy did extra well that trip. I think that even the owners must have had a little superstition about it at first, for though of course his ship had no Sunday fish notes, and some of the grog-lovers had taken good care the owners should know how they were being robbed, they said never a word to Billy about it. So he came to sea again more determined than before, and with his old "Bethel" flag as high as ever. I noticed now and again, what a lot of visits Tom was beginning to pay him, and somehow Billy seemed to be getting quite an influence over him.

One glorious morning on the next trip, when there wasn't a breath of wind to help the fleet make a day haul, I dropped aboard Tom early in the day, and asked him to come and spend the day with me on the old coper. For the first time in his life he wouldn't come with me, and at last I got it out of him that he had promised his

wife, Annie, that he wouldn't go to the grog-ship any more.

"Fact is, I'm tee-total, Bill," he said.

"Come along—that won't keep you from a bit of fun. When did you ever see me take too much?" I answered.

"No, no, Bill; it isn't that. I don't know what's come over me, but I can't come, old lad. I really can't."

It made me a bit angry, that did. So I went off, and for the first and last time in my life stayed aboard one of those hells, till the thirst from its aniseeded brandy had made a fool of me. It was "Just von leedle drop," at first. But that was a drop that made you need two more after it.

I know it made Tom feel down a bit, too, for like the good genius that he always was to me, he was aboard at daybreak next morning, and just made me come off and spend the day on the *Rover*. As he told me afterwards, a packet of good things from home came off by the cutter that very night, and he said he believed it was "sent" there on purpose to help him; that by himself he felt he didn't know what to do.

I pretty well guessed how things were working,

and wasn't surprised to hear Tom had been to chapel with his wife, last time home, though he had said nothing to me about it. I knew he had never been inside a place of worship before, except when he was married.

Soon after this things took a turn with Billy. We all somehow had an eye to how he was getting on. Perhaps it was because, as a rule, there was nothing to talk about out there, but fish, fish, fish. But we did a lot more minding other people's business than we had any right to. Upon my word, looking back now, it might have been a series of women's tea-meetings.

Billy did badly that next trip, and when he was home the owner met him on the dock and swore at him, and told him he'd "have to give up his d——d Bethelling, or get out of his ship." Poor Billy was awfully down on his luck then, though he left the dock flying the "Bethel" flag at his masthead. For somehow everything went against him, and the fleet made some big Sunday hauls. I don't think he did badly in reality. That is, he made good paying trips, but his owner was a money-grubber, and he couldn't get over the good hauls that he thought Billy was losing. So next time he gave him his choice—to stop

Bethelling or clear out—though you must know he was a regular church-goer himself, and with his family always made a great show on Sundays.

All that voyage, Billy worked his level best, and his crew stood by him nobly, for they all liked him. I noticed, too, that Tom was a good deal more aboard with Billy. I supposed it was just sympathy. But one fine Sunday, when we all shot for a haul, our mate sang out, "Why, look there, skipper, there's the *Rover* with a flag up, following Billy Cullington. I do believe he's turned pious, too; though if report's right, it ain't time to be Bethelling now, as the owners aren't going to have any of it."

This news also soon went home, and though Tom owned his own ship, it seemed to have got the owners well frightened. There was among us a regular old boozer, who had once been skipper of a ship but had lost it for his drunken habits, and had now sunk to be cook under a skipper who once had sailed with him as his own cook boy. This fellow was so much impressed by the harrowing losses the owners were likely to sustain, that he sent home exaggerated accounts of all that went on. He could do it with all the

better grace, because there wasn't the least fear of his falling into Billy's evil ways himself.

So long before the blow fell, Billy knew it was coming, and the thought of his wife and children suffering want through his doings was almost more than he could bear. Many a yarn about him Tom used to come to me with, and many a plan as to how he could cheer the little fellow up. Indeed, to this day I believe a large factor in Tom's own conversion—and so through that the fight for Sunday freedom at sea—was the love he bore Billy, and the desire to share his persecution and so help him to bear it. Thus indirectly does the devil, so I believe, always tend to overreach himself, and lend a hand to his own undoing.

We weren't long before we heard it at sea. His owner had asked Billy for a promise before he would let him go to sea again, that he would "Fish just like any other man, Sunday or Monday." Billy had been a wretched man all the time the cloud only threatened, but now it had burst, he spoke up like the true man he always was, and told his owner, right there, that sorry as he was to lose his ship (and he had done right

well in her this last trip, again), he couldn't give the necessary promise.

Just to make it all the harder for him, the slack time was coming on in the fisheries, right in the heat of summer. So, whether for that reason, or because the owners were agreed to force the men to do as they always had done, the owner did not send Billy's ship to sea, and no one else would give him a berth. So he had to walk about on the dock doing nothing day after day, and seeing all his little home going to the pawn-shop, while his ship was tied up to the quay, idle. I would more than gladly have offered the little fellow a berth on the *Wild Wave*, but my crew kept with me right along, and I couldn't well turn them out to make a berth for some one else.

VIII

The MISSION-SHIP TAKES US by SURPRISE

JUST about this time one of our carriers, coming out from London, brought off a visitor, who was himself a religious man. His name was Mr. Mather. His coming excited no surprise, for visitors often came off for a holiday, and to get the sea air. He was aboard of me once or twice, and seemed to take the state of things at sea a good deal to heart, especially about the grog-ships. When I told him of little Billy, he fairly cried about it. He went back home, like all the rest, and we soon forgot that he had been with us. But some months after there began to be some talk about a mission-ship coming out to the fleet, which was to fish all the week and keep prayers on Sunday.

Of course there was a lot of talk about it. What good was a mission-boat? How many would go praying on Sundays, even if it were too calm to fish?—at any rate, if there was a chance of a spree on the coper. Some said it



"THE ENSIGN JOINED THE FLEET"

was all a pack o' nonsense. They'd like to see any religion that would satisfy North Sea fishermen like a grog-ship. It was cheaper grog fishermen wanted, and more of it. They thought the Gover'ment ought to send out *free* grog, like they did in the navy. Wasn't a fisherman as good as a jack tar, any day o' the week, they'd like to know. Fishermen didn't get their rights, not by half. They'd make short work of any o' them canting preachers. And so on, and so on, with all the usual sententious wisdom of the tap-room. Most of us thought, I must say, that the whole matter would end in talk, while if such a thing ever did come up, the most charitable of us gave her three months before "they"—whoever they might be—"would be mighty sorry they ever had anything to do with her."

One fine day, however, an old Yarmouth vessel called the *Ensign* joined the fleet. I knew her well, for I verily believe I could tell almost any vessel on the North Sea, in those old days, as soon as her spars topped the horizon. She had been painted up all new, and each bow was decorated with a blue flag, with the words "Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen" on it. Of course every one had to go and have a

look at her, for new things at sea are rare, and the old ship was like a new pin in her fresh paint, dressed as she was, too, in all the bunting she could muster. But a greater surprise was still in store for us; for when our boat got alongside, who should bob up over the rail but little Billy Cullington, grinning like a Cheshire cat!

"What cheer, Billy? What are you doing there? I thought you were on show as a skeleton, by now."

"O, there's a kick in the old horse yet," he replied. "Thank God I've got a job at last that don't need no Sunday fishin'. They've given me charge o' this craft, and though she sails from Yarmouth, I'm to fish along with the Red-White fleet, so long as they don't kick me out. But come aboard and have a look at her. There ain't nothin' what bites aboard, and there ain't no charge for looking at her."

It certainly was score No. 1 for "the mission blokes," as the men called the managers, to have chosen Billy for skipper. We all felt at home aboard at once, and so we were, too. Nothing could tire Billy of showing her off. The ship was more to him than any mother's darling.

"You ain't seen the dispensary, have yer,

skipper? Why, I'm half a doctor, now. Bin up to a London horspital nigh three months; and look here, I've got the ambulance certificate here. I wish you had a pain inside yer. I'd jest like yer to try one o' them mixtures. They're a'most *bound* to cure yer. You see it's written on the bottle what it's for. This here's cough mixture. That's the one suits our crew best. It takes away their appetite fine. Dick's bin a tryin' a lot o' them, so I could make sure just what they'd be good for out here. You see we don't have all them things they have ashore."

Then he would run on about the cabin, or the harmonium, or anything he thought we ought to notice.

"You see that there kettle, skipper? How many do yer think that would make a mug for? Well, just about forty men. I tried it on with Jimmy here. He can drink as much as six o' most men, and it took him two whole days to empty it. My orders is, 'Always have a good mug o' tea for any one that comes aboard, and just try to make every one comfortable.' There's checkers and heaps o' games in that box there, and there's a pile o' readin' in the locker—pictures, too, most of it, so any one can read it. O'

course you won't mind taking a bundle with yer."

And so he rattled on till he really had us all as interested in the ship as he was. I almost felt it was rather unkind not to have a pain somewhere in my vitals, just to let the little fellow have a try on me with one of his mixtures. Indeed, he was so eager to see that every one got all they wanted, "just to give the ship a warmin'," that it was no fault of his, if no one gave the dispensary a chance before morning.

Well, there was a lot of talk about her again. Some sneered and said she wasn't wanted, and "they didn't see what good she'd do, anyway." But at least one or two were real glad to see her, and among them, none so glad as Tom. He was aboard the morning she arrived, almost before she got there. And it seemed at first as if he was going to leave the *Rover* and live aboard her. He told me it was a very queer thing, but he'd been hoping and hoping that the mission vessel would come to our fleet. And it all came out afterwards that he and Annie and my wife had been praying for it for a long time. Still they seemed awfully surprised about it, when it did come, as if they didn't much trust that God Al-

mighty would hear them. To Tom it meant a great deal. For the one thing that had kept him back from acting like Billy, and telling folk he was a Christian, was that he had no trust in himself, and was dreadfully afraid he might make a mess of it. For though, as I have told before, Tom was in every spree going, he was as weak as ditch water, when it came to saying "No" to any one.

The mission-ship proved no loafer. No one could say she was sponging on others to make a living for her. She fished as hard as any other boat, and did her other work besides. Of course she did no fishing on Sundays. She kept the day from sundown on Saturday till sundown on Sunday; she had no fish to board on the carrier on Sunday morning, and was as clean as a new pin all day. What seems odd is that no mission vessel from that day to this ever has done seven days' fishing in the week, and yet they've done as well as any of those that did. Year in, year out, no vessels have done better than they have, though none of them has ever shot a net on a Sunday. It was a good thing, too, that they had lots o' work to do. Many a man wanted to go aboard her, and yet didn't like to, as he had no

business there. But seeing the crew was so worked, almost every morning some one would drop aboard to "help them get through with fish." For they learnt that Billy's pay depended, like every other skipper's, on what he caught, while he lost a lot of time by having always to be first to reach the carrier, and last to leave it, tending on every one. In this way every one got a chance to get aboard, on every day that the fleet "boarded fish." The very fact that they could do something to help the mission-ship out, gave a lot of the men a personal interest in her, and even those who laughed loudest at the idea of such a ship, often went aboard for a yarn, and to lend little Billy a hand.



"WHEN THE FLEET BOARDED FISH"

IX

LITTLE BILLY'S FIRST SERMON

I HAD made Billy a solemn promise, the day he showed us the ship, that on the first fine Sunday I would "heave the fleet to" in the morning, and come aboard. As it turned out it was as smooth as oil the very next Sunday, so I kept my promise and went aboard. The vessels lay all about, rolling lazily on the swell, some mending their nets and looking to their canvas. It was a pretty sight, as the smacks with their tanned sails helped to show off the mission-ship with her spotless white, and her great blue flag at the masthead, now and again shaking out a bit as she rolled. While sure enough, there at the mizzen gaff end, hoisted out on the boat-hook staff, was the very "Bethel" flag that had got Billy into all his trouble. The hold was laid out with fish boxes for seats, and the hatches being off, the sunlight poured down and made it a mighty cheerful-looking place for service. We could all do a bit of singing. Some of us could read a

bit and most of us knew the words of some of the hymns. The service was fine, though it did seem queer to me at that time for a lot of us fishermen to be going on like that. I'm sure if there had been any landsmen there, we should have cleared right out, and much more so if the mission had sent us out a full-fledged parson.

I should like you to attend a fishermen's service at sea nowadays. I'm sure you'd be surprised to hear the men say their prayers. They do it like fishermen do most things,—just as if they meant it. And though they can't sing like some of the choirs in the churches, there's no doubt whatever that they can "make a cheerful noise together." They always sing the kind of hymn that has a good swing to it, and generally one that has a good chorus too. When once you got men like "Singing May" or "Teddy Stebbins" under way, with Billy's harmonium, they'd hardly stop even for the plum duff that we always had, to mark Sunday dinners. I can't remember all Billy said for his first sermon, but at any rate every one understood it. For he never did mince matters, and as he knew some of us were uncommon bad sinners, he didn't mind saying so. It kept all the men listening, espe-

cially when he talked like any man would on deck, and didn't use a single word that every one couldn't understand. All the men said afterwards that they had "liked it well enough." I think some of them that Billy hit hardest said they liked it, just to make it seem they didn't think it was them he was talking of. Still, Billy had a wonderful winning way with him always: perhaps that is why no one was hurt. I think what made it seem so good was, that every one knew that Billy believed and meant every word he said. He wouldn't have been surprised one bit, I know, if suddenly the sky had opened and the blessing he wanted all hands to get, had come pouring down like a thunder-shower.

I suppose I ought to tell how the day ended, but it isn't a very easy task. Billy somehow managed to keep me and the vice-admiral and Tom yarning on, after all the others had gone. And then somehow he got a chance, and started to talk right straight to us. All he wanted us to believe was that God loved us, and even on the North Sea cared whether we went to the devil or didn't. I'd never thought much about it, and even when Tom had spoken about it once or twice lately, it hadn't seemed very likely. I knew,

of course, that my girl would give her eyes to get me to care about that sort of thing; but somehow, though I liked her to go to chapel and all that, it had always seemed for women and such like, and not for me. A great deal of what happened that night was due to Tom, for I couldn't but *see* what a different man it had made of him. He was as gentle as a woman in thinking for others, and yet was as smart as he'd ever been with the fish, and fuller of his fun than even when we were lads together. Indeed, if one man ever loved another I loved Tom, and would have gone over the side any time for him at a moment's notice.

Well, we weren't much used to kindnesses in those days, and I remember at last Billy's last argument. "I know I'm not made for talkin'," he said. "If I knowed how to persuade yer, I'd do it right here. Look here," he said, as a bright thought seemed suddenly to strike him, and he went off to his cabin. In a moment or two he returned with three great warm new woollen mufflers—the best we had ever seen, I suppose.

"Yer see them mufflers. Well, some ladies on the land, what never saw yer, knitted them

mufflers. There's the whole thing in them mufflers right enough. Now I'm to give yer these if yer'll admit it."

"What's in them, Billy?" I asked as I unrolled one of them. And a noble piece of work it was too. Must have taken a powerful lot of their time, besides the wool. "Why, love's in 'em," he shouted triumphantly; "love, o' course. Can't yer see it?" I tried to look as if I expected it to be there wrapped up in a lump, and couldn't find it. "Why, Bill," he said, "I believe you know what I mean, only yer don't want to own it. Those ladies never saw you, did they? No. Nor you never saw them, nor never will. I'd jest like yer to take them mufflers," he pleaded. "I know they're better than anything I can say."

I didn't say anything for a time. The fact is, I didn't feel like it. Then, before I could think of anything he added, "How much more must the blessed Saviour have loved yer, when He gave His own life for yer."

It seems very strange, looking back on it all these years after, how so little a thing seems to turn the current of a man's whole life. Tom broke right down there, and said he'd made up

his mind. And for the first time I can remember there were tears in my eyes, too, for our vice-admiral, he said just the same. The end of it was that from that time to this, I have done my best to live as a man ought for whom Christ gave His life. And though I know I have made a poor hand of it often enough, especially when things went wrong with the fleet, and fish was scarce, and it seemed as if some of the men were taking advantage of me just because they hated my "setting myself up as better than any one else," I'm of the same mind to-day as I was for the first time that night. And if I can hold on till perhaps the sea claims me, too, at last, as it has two out of us three already, I shall have nothing to regret that I ever went aboard the mission-ship *Ensign*.



"SKIPPERS THAT THREW IN THEIR LOT"

X

WHAT The GROG-SHIP did for SKIPPER TOM

MANY a time after that I was able to do Billy a good turn by heaving the fleet to on a fine Sunday morning, and giving every man a chance to go aboard to service. The owners soon stopped saying anything about it; for there grew up quite a number of skippers that threw in their lot with the Christian men, and the owners soon found out that these were the best men they had. They fished none the worse, and they sold nothing from their ships to the copers; and a man who went drinking on the coper wouldn't have called himself a Christian. For when a fisherman does go so far as to let the rest know that he is "on the Lord's side," he intends doing something at it, and doesn't want it flung in his face that he is a hypocrite; not if he can help it, that is. In fact, a half-and-half Christian had a hot time as long as it lasted, though as a rule that wasn't

very long, for there wasn't anything to gain by going to service at sea, as there might be if all your neighbours saw you marching your family along to church on the land, where it "looks respectable" anyhow. But in spite of it all the grog-ships did enough trade to let us see pretty well that we couldn't expect to drive them out all together. And now and again there would be an old-time spree, and an old time "accident." As, for instance, when Skipper Fox ran down the *Rose of England* in broad daylight, and drowned every man aboard. Of course, it never came out at the inquiry that he was drunk; but he had enough grog in him that morning to make most men see six ships, instead of one.

The coper's great lure was tobacco. Nearly every fisherman smokes his pipe: even Billy himself did. Once some one had said they didn't see how he, a Christian, could smoke, and asked him how he'd like the Lord to come and find him with a pipe in his mouth. The questioner admitted that once he had "used tobacco himself, but gave it up, and after three days never wanted it any more." Now Billy never gave his answers in a hurry. So he just said, "Well, I don't think of the Lord that way, nor o' His coming. Per-

haps I wouldn't like Him to come and find a great fid of this here pork in my mouth. But I'll find out and let yer know."

Billy gave up smoking for a whole month from that day, and every night and morning he prayed that if the Lord didn't wish him to use tobacco, He would take the taste for it away in that month. But at the end of the time Billy got under way again, for he said he found he wanted it just as bad as ever. Moreover, I've heard him say, he "knew he could smoke unto the Lord." For he was able to go aboard many a craft where he knew he wouldn't be wanted otherwise, if he just carried a spare bit of tobacco with him. I know my wife now often wishes I would sit down and take a smoke. I suppose I do get in the way at times, for I feel a bit unhandy myself, now and again, in among those white curtain jimcracks she has in our parlour. Still, I don't grudge any man the only bit of fire he has on deck, for his six lonely hours on watch, night after night, in winter. Anything is company, when a man's all alone. I've known men count the hours till they called the watch by the six smokes and the six pots of tea they would get while the net was down.

The great attraction about the coper's tobacco was the price of it. You see, those foreign vessels paid no duty on it, and could sell it in the fleet at thirty-five cents a pound, while to buy it at home we had to pay a dollar. It was on April the 16th, some two years after the missionship came out, that Tom and I had just joined the fleet—together, as usual. It was my time to take the *Flags*, and I took the fleet over on the "Silver Pits" fishing. There was a veritable tobacco famine in the fleet. No coper had been with it for a week, the weather being very unsettled, and we being a good way from the Dutch coast. At last one joined us, and half the fleet went aboard, Tom among them. I heard the whole story from several hands afterwards.

It seems there was a plot made at once to catch Tom if they could, and make a fool of him. So they began singing out to him, "Hullo, Tom; thought you'd got too good to look at an old pal, when you saw one. Glad to see you off for half an hour, Tom. Going to stay and have a taste with us, I suppose," and so on. Tom took it all in good part, as he always did, laughed, and

went below to get his tobacco. "I believe his bit-o'-frock has made Tom half a woman," one sang out. "Come, Tom, here's half my glass for old friendship's sake." At last, when they had taunted him because he was afraid he'd get drunk, and was afraid he couldn't control himself, and with all sorts of good-natured chaff, they hit him in his weak spot, and at last got him to take the "von leedle drop. Shest for goot vellowship." And so Tom took that stuff with vitriol in it that made his throat burn for another "leedle drop, only nodings." And so he sat down among then, and soon they had him robbed of all his senses.

At night it looked dirty. Tom's mate began to get uneasy, and wondered where the skipper had got to. Just at dark some one passing the *Rover* shouted, "Tom's aboard the coper. You'd better go and fetch him." So they got the boat out again, though already the foam was beginning to fly, and Tom, drunk and helpless, was ferried back aboard his own ship. It was already high time to be getting in some canvas. Everything looked like a blow, and already night was on them. The skipper was laid down on the

deck, while the men got the boat in, the mate going to the tiller himself. Already there was a nasty lop, and as the *Rover* headed up, to let them get the boat aboard, a drop or two of water came in over the rail. Suddenly in the darkness the mate was startled by the skipper staggering right into him as he held the tiller. The cold water had partly sobered poor Tom, and he knew, by some strange instinct, that all hands were needed forward to get the boat in.

"Gi' me the helm, Dick," he hiccoughed, "and go for'ard and gi' 'em a hand wi' th' boat."

"No, no, skipper. You go below. You ain't well. You ain't fit to steer just now."

But the cursed drink had got poor Tom turned into another man altogether, and the Demon of the Bottle in him shrieked out, "Wha' did I say? Gi' me th' tiller. Isn't th' *Rover* my ole ship? I'll—steer—her—ter—hell, I tell yer, if I like." With that, mad in his cups, he wrenched the lanyard from the frightened Dick, and leant for a moment over the tiller. At that instant a great green sea rolling aft hit the rudder, gave the long, low tiller a great kick, and hove Tom over the rail into the water.

It was useless even to look for him in the darkness, and so the mate had nothing to do but take the vessel home, the flag half-mast. Worse than all else, he had to go and tell Annie that Tom—her brave, gentle Tom—had gone out into eternity —DRUNK.

XI

The FIGHT AGAINST The COPERS

YES,—now it was too late; it came right home to us. Annie pined away from that day. She never could see that, though the old book says, "No drunkard shall inherit the Kingdom of God," God is greater even than our interpretation of His own book. And that He knew Tom was never a drunkard. God's ways are past finding out. And I shall always think that Tom's death was necessary to bring the fight with the grog-ships to an issue, and so save perhaps many another victim from hell on earth, and a drunkard's eternity.

Little Billy called a meeting on the mission-ship as soon as we could get together, and the upshot of it was that the mission-folk decided to sell tobacco on their vessels. But how were they to compete with the foreign tobacco in price? The Government wouldn't hear of the mission carrying it out even to the high seas, in bond. They said it would lead to a lot more

smuggling. Even as it was, the boats came in often enough with their furled sails stuffed with it, and blocks of hard tobacco nailed up everywhere they could stow it out of sight.

But the managers of the mission were determined this time. They found out that if the manufacturers would let them have it at cost price, and ship it for them in bond to Ostend, they could send the mission-boats over there, take it out to sea duty free, as the grog-vessels did, and then sell it at twenty-five cents a pound (the grog-ship charged thirty-five), and still cover expenses. When the first mission-vessel got over there, however, she had her net alongside—a thing no grog-vessel ever carried. So there was yet another difficulty. For they would not let her have it as a trader, and she wouldn't dare to go into Yarmouth to get her net, if she had taken the tobacco on board. So she had to get a "chum" to take charge of her net at sea, and then run in and get what she wanted. Moreover, as there were not yet mission-ships with all of the fleets, they made arrangements with a couple of trustworthy skippers in each fleet to take charge of a good supply. When they had to leave for home, they always transferred the

balance of their tobacco to another vessel; so none of the tobacco ever went back to England. Each of these tobacco-ships used to carry a fathom of blue bunting a little way up the foretopmast stay.

This was the beginning of the end for the grop-ships; for the tobacco being cheaper and just as good, every one went to the mission-ships for it, and the other vessels began to lose money. And now, too, the Government let the mission have what had always been refused before. A bonded warehouse was assigned to it at Yarmouth, and the trouble and expense of going to Ostend were saved. In return the mission-ships undertook to send in weekly reports of the amount of tobacco supplied to the different vessels, and this helped to stop smuggling.

Billy was a happy man when he found the grog-vessel was really beginning to feel his presence. Many an artful dodge he tried, to make it as hard as possible for the men to get to the coper at all. He always kept as far off as possible in the morning, that no one putting a boat out for tobacco would find it easy to board the coper the same day. Moreover, there were so many men aboard the mission-boat, for one



thing or another, that there was more company, better fun and a heartier welcome there, than on the grog-ship itself. So the old grog-ships were driven out at last, long before international treaties made the sale of liquor on the high seas a crime and rendering the vessel liable to seizure by a gunboat of any nation. Finally, even the Tricolour—the last to shelter them—took a stand against the copers; and so these pirates of the North Sea became a thing of the past.

The mission-vessels now began to exert a much greater influence. Billy believed that there was only one thing to keep fishermen straight. He had seen many a good man safely weather the wild northeasters, and then get wrecked, body and soul, when he came into port. For these men have not only great strong bodies, but passions to correspond, both of which are cooped up at sea for months at a stretch; so it is not surprising that they often lose their self-control, when surrounded by the temptations of the ports. There every kind of net is spread to catch the sailor, and rob him of his money and his self-respect; and where one is utterly unknown, one has no fear of being talked about.

Billy believed the only control strong enough

to help at these times, must come from above. So, in spite of the added work, he never allowed a morning to pass, when men came aboard, without his urging some of them not to go away without a word or two of prayer. On a fine morning this generally included one or two of those swinging old hymns which every one was beginning to know now; and often enough Billy would give one of his "talks," or some visitor from London would give an informal little address.

Little by little the number of Christian skippers increased; and the improvement in their homes on the shore was very noticeable. The magistrates often remarked that fewer fishermen found their way to jail nowadays; while the cruelty to the prentice lads almost ceased. Sometimes I think a little more rope's ending doesn't hurt a young sailor. Our laws would almost make "Mollies" of them nowadays. Our chief magistrate stated that only half the number of police had been needed in the fishermen's quarter when most of them were at home (*i. e.*, about Christmas and Easter), since the mission had begun its work. So the prophets who had said it was "free grog and less cant" the men needed, were both right

and wrong. For that religion isn't cant which helps to make men into new creatures; while the freedom needed about the grog, was freedom from the devil's chain, which had made slaves of so many of the best men amongst us.

But those who said the "mission blokes" would soon be sorry enough they had had anything to do with it, were wrong altogether. For the one little ship became two, and the two three, and the three became THIRTEEN—till not only was there one for every fleet on the North Sea, but even with all the single boaters, in the Bristol Channel, on the coast of Iceland, and at last with our brothers across the Atlantic, on the wild coasts of Labrador, the same blue flag was hoisted to the breeze that had meant a message of hope and of help to seamen in their times of need, far away on the wild North Sea.

XII

THREE HUNDRED MILES to a HOSPITAL

THERE were other ways in which the mission was able to lend a hand. Worse accidents often befell us, than even Billy's surgical skill could cope with. Thus, Skipper Jack Green was hit by a heavy sea one day, flung into the lee scuppers, and washed to and fro on the deck among the great iron trawl heads, beams and other wreckage. He was found lying half dead under a mass of rubbish, with his thigh badly broken. The crew got him down below, but they were too frightened to try and do anything for him. Billy must be sent for at all hazards. In oil frocks and cork life-jackets, like old knights in armour, they started off in such weather as bade fair to add to the number of broken limbs needing his attention. They got the little fellow, however, and came back with him in triumph, much as if he were a bundle of his own reading matter.

When he had been wrung out a bit, he ex-

amined the case, and though he had a fisherman's hands more like a great crab's than a doctor's, he could handle a wound as tenderly as any one. He at once pronounced the case as being too much for him. Billy's special delight had always been pains in the "inside." "So many has them, you see," he used to say, when he was accused of devoting undue attention to them. It had to be a very scattered man who went to him for medicine, and got away again without something to put the "inside" right. Indeed, I always thought of Billy's bottle labelled "Stomach Mixture," when we used to read about the widow's cruse of oil. But on this occasion, as I have said, even he had to admit that the famous bottle was inadequate to meet the case.

"You'll have ter go to the horspital, Jack," he said.

The ship was still rolling and tossing, and the sick man groaning, as every movement sent a fresh agony through him.

"Go to the horspital?" he replied. "No, I couldn't stand being moved on deck again. It would kill me, I know."

Billy was already hammering up a fish trunk, and setting every one to work to make a suitable

box to put the injured limb in. When at last he had it stuffed well with oakum, he lashed it on with a good roll of tarry spunion. Skipper Jack got a little ease then, and was grateful enough.

"It'll be all right soon, Billy," he said. "I expects I'll be able to get about again in a short while."

"You'll do no such thing," said Billy. "If you can get the vessel home, I'm not saying that wouldn't be the best thing. If you can't, you must go in the carrier to horspital, and be sharp about it."

Billy knew what a compound fracture meant, and that poor Skipper Jack's thigh was badly broken was plain to every one.

The weather continued bad, and the wind continued ahead for a passage home; so on the third day Billy insisted that Jack had better risk the voyage to the steamer, than wait any longer. For the skipper was in a fever, and Billy had visions of mortification setting in.

"You'll have ter risk it, Jack," he said; "and I'm a-going ter risk it, too. My mate's going ter keep the ship here, and I'm going with you to London in the carrier."

Already Skipper Jack showed signs of wander-



"THE LITTLE BOAT WITH THE HELPLESS MAN IN IT"

ing, so they wouldn't take him on the carrier without some one to have an eye to him. Ferrying fish in bad weather is one thing, but ferrying a heavy man with a broken thigh is quite another. When, after long waiting, they at last got him into the small boat and alongside the steamer, their task was only begun. The great steamer, with her high perpendicular sides and no ladder, was rolling in the trough of the sea; and the little boat with the helpless man in it was now buried under her bulwarks as she rolled towards it, and again flung with its keel almost on the steamer's rail, as a green swell heaved up and spun her into the air. At the critical moment a cross sea came along, the splinting caught on the rail as it passed aboard, and poor Skipper Jack was more dead than alive before he found himself on the hard rolling locker, waiting to face a three-hundred-mile journey to market with the fish. The lashings, too, were all knocked adrift from the injured leg, and the fracture ten times worse than before. Billy never left him a moment till he got him to the great London hospital, and thereby saved his life. But it was too late, the surgeon said, to save the limb; so Skipper Jack never knew what it was to tread a deck

again, and a hard time his young family had, living on the charity of the neighbours for the most part, just because there was no doctor in the fleet.

Then again there was my own deckie, Davie Page. The lad was with me from the time I first took over the *Wild Wave.* He was the pluckiest climber I have ever seen. He would come down the after leach rope of the topsails head down. I don't think he knew what fear was, and he was supple as a cat. Right out at sea, he would go up and sit on the main truck, or spin round on it on his stomach. Once he had been trying some balancing trick on the rail, when somehow he slipped and fell overboard. The mate hove him a rope, and though he could not swim a yard, he actually let go of it with his hands and was hauled aboard as if he were a cod-fish, holding on to it with his teeth.

Well, the fleet was then off Herschels, on the north coast of Denmark, working amongst the strong tides of the Skaggerack. Our deckie had gone below to help the cook lad with the dinner, as it was such a nasty choppy sea, and was just lifting the great boiling kettle off the fire when a nasty cross sea suddenly flung the ship to one

side, and even Davie's agility did not save him being shot to leeward with all the boiling stuff on top of him. Billy was adrift, a little to one side of the fleet, and I didn't find him till next day. Meanwhile I couldn't get the clothes off poor Davie: they all seemed glued to him; all we could think of was to lay him on our hard wood locker, and keep him well soaked in cold water. He tried to make out it didn't pain him much, but every now and again the moving wrung a groan from him. It was another of those cases that was "too much" for Billy. All he could do was to get the poor fellow's clothing off, and give him something to ease the pain. He was afraid to do too much.

"You go straight for Grimsby, Bill," he said to me. "It's a fine fair wind, and you'll likely enough be home in forty-eight hours."

The sky looked like continued westerly weather, so we left the fleet at once. Next morning, however, it fell stark calm, and so it stayed for nearly three days, with not a sail in sight,—just blistering hot calm days, and no chance of getting anywhere. All the time poor Davie lay on the locker, wandering in his mind, and shouting about all sorts of strange things he thought he

saw. At last when the wind did get up, it was all ahead, and so I held on and on, close hauled, with our head to the south'ard, till I sighted Heligoland, where I ran in and got a doctor to come off. He had Davie sent ashore, and they looked after him right well. He was saved by the skin of his teeth, but the terrible scarring seemed to take all his old suppleness out of him, and he was never the same lad again.

So we were often hoping and praying a doctor would come out to each fleet, and have a little hospital aboard the mission-ship,—though we all thought a single week out here would capsize any doctor alive.

XIII

A GREAT SURGEON COMES

ONE morning when we boarded the cutter from London, we found a visitor there from the Council of the Mission. It was a doctor, come out to see if a hospital ship and a doctor with the fleets was a possibility. He at once proved himself to be a splendid man. None of your dandies, always lying about and wanting things done for them, making you half afraid they'd drop to pieces or overboard when you weren't looking. No,—he was every inch a sailor born, never seasick, and able to be about in all weathers, blow high, blow low. I've seen him in the small boats when they were boarding fish, and on the carrier's bridge, when the seas were coming over both to leeward and to wind-'ard, and the men and fish boxes being washed about in the scuppers like a lot of ninepins.

He never missed a haul without turning out and giving a hand, the whole time he was out, and helped to paw the net like a new deck hand. He had the right stuff in him. Everybody

knows his name now, because all England—yes, and the whole world—rang with it not long ago, when he saved the King's life. For Frederick Treves—Sir Frederick, as he is called now—was the first doctor that ever came out to the fishermen in the North Sea. And while he has saved the highest in the land, through him hundreds of the fishermen also have been saved from suffering and loss and perhaps death. Who shall say which he will one day look back on as the better deed?

As soon as he returned, a young doctor joined the *Ensign* for the whole of a two months' cruise in winter. He told them all that he thoroughly enjoyed it, and what was odd to us, he really seemed to. The fleet gave him a great ovation when the ensign's time was up. Every vessel was lighted up with coloured flares on deck and aloft. And heaps of rockets went up to say good-bye. After that a hospital was fitted up for him on one of the larger mission-vessels, and from that time on, the largest fleets at least have never been without a doctor.

In 1890 Her Majesty ordered the first real hospital ship to Osborne in the Isle of Wight, where she graciously inspected it herself, and by

the request of the mission named it the *Queen Victoria*. That vessel was shortly followed by her sister ship, the *Albert*, and that by others. Thus, though many fish-eaters never thought about there being fish-catchers living far away at sea, the Queen herself found time to think of us among the countless interests of her vast dominions, and all her own family cares and sorrows, and "God save and bless the Queen" went up from the heart and lips of many a deep-sea fisherman.

Many changes have taken place since then, and many of the old abuses have been remedied. Regulations have been made that have greatly reduced the loss of life while boarding fish. Masters and mates are obliged to hold certificates of competence. There is no longer room for drunken skippers. Apprentices nowadays are not cruelly treated or thrown into prison. By means of the enormous amount of reading matter distributed every year, the men's higher faculties have been stimulated, and their lower passions brought under better control. Moreover, all the lads are sent to school and taught to read and write, and a better-educated, more self-respecting set of men has grown up.

One more greatly needed addition to the mission work came later. Ladies all over the land ceased to be content to help only by knitting woollen articles such as the fishermen needed, but were often unable to buy. These of course are an immense boon in winter, and as they wear out very quickly are one of the most expensive parts of a fisherman's outfit. Sea-boot stockings, mufflers, mittens and even guernseys are sold now at nominal prices on the mission-ships. One of the most painful and otherwise almost inevitable injuries are rendered largely a thing of the past. I refer to sea-water boils, and deep cracks in the fishermen's hands and wrists caused by the chafing of the oily frocks. These admit the dirty salt water and fish cleansings, and when the men are asleep the tissues set something like cement, and it takes an hour or so of exquisite agony to work them loose again. Many a man has lived to bless the knitters of the mittens that mean so much to them.

But, as I say, the ladies ceased to be satisfied with this. Finding what a lot of orphans and friendless boys there were, and how many of them were from the workhouses, reformatories

and industrial homes, they set to work to form a letter-writing association. The movement started when one of the judges of the London courts was off to visit the fleets. He noticed how very eager the men were, not only for news, but for letters, and how few ever got any. So much so, that when sometimes a disappointed man had searched through the box and found none of his own, he was tempted to take some one else's, as better than none. From one lady writing to one friendless lad, an association some two thousand strong has grown up, and many and many a young fellow, who only needed the touch of personal sympathy that has often come in this strange and unpromising way, has been brought to serve the Master, and to cast in his lot with Christian men. The sense of having a true, though unseen friend ashore, makes it easier to realize the unseen presence of another and a greater Friend.

XIV

LOOKING OUT for The MEN ASHORE

ONE loophole still remained to be filled. Men who had come under the influence of the mission-vessels, found a terrible void when they came home from sea. I suppose there must be something queer about us fishermen when on the land. We are a bit clannish and don't care to mix with landsmen that we don't know, so often enough a man ashore is like a codfish out of water. As the dangers ashore were ten times as many as those afloat, now that the grog-vessels were gone, not a few good men fell back when at home. One reason was that a young fellow's pockets were then full of money, which at sea he couldn't spend. There were many distressing cases, when fathers were victimized by the crimps, the land-sharks and the saloon-keepers that abounded in the fishermen's quarters. They paraded their flaring attractions on every side, directly a boat's crew landed. Some of their efforts were thoroughly organized. The

names of the crews of each of the vessels were kept registered, and the time for them to be at home as carefully noted as by their wives and friends. Many a man was met at the dock side, on landing, and never allowed to see his home till he had been robbed of every penny of his pay. Sometimes he never saw it at all, being carried aboard his vessel drunk and sent to sea again, his mate having looked after the revictualling of his ship.

I remember passing a saloon-door on the main street one dark and rainy winter night. Just as the light from the window fell on me, a tall, gaunt woman, who in the early days of her married life had lived in a comfortable little home next to my own, touched me on the shoulder.

"Bill," she said, "the *Bonnie Lass* is in, isn't she?"

"You, Jennie!" I said, quite startled. "Yes, lass, she came in this morning. What are you doing here this dreadful night, and you only half clad?"

"I'm looking for Joe. You haven't seen him, have you?"

"No, Jennie, I can't say I have. Hasn't he been home yet?"

"They've got him into one of these hells," she sobbed. "You'll help me, for old times' sake, won't you, Bill?"

"Help you, Jennie?—of course I will. You just run home; I'll find Joe."

"No, no," she wailed; "I'll come too."

The third saloon I entered, there sat Joe, half-dazed, with five or six of those infernal thieves plying him with liquor. They hadn't got his money out of him yet.

"Come on, Joe," I said; "your wife wants you."

He looked at me in a sheepish way, as if he couldn't see who I was. "Come, Joe," I repeated—"come along with me. I'll see you home."

"Let the man alone," shouted one of the scoundrels, several others backing him up. "What business is it of yours, if the man wants a drink after a voyage?"

"Step over here, and I'll tell you what business it is of mine," I replied. Thank God, a man isn't a deep-sea fisherman all his life, to fear half a dozen saloon bullies, so long as he has his senses. The man made a step my way,—(sometimes I'm sorry for what I did, but the devilry of the whole business made me mad), but before

he had time to take another, I had him at arm's length over my head. He only felt like a heavy fish-box. The next moment I hove him head first among his pals, as if it was over the cutter's rails. He knocked over one man as he went, and lit on his head, where he lay without moving a finger. No one said a word. Perhaps it was as well they didn't; some one would have been killed if they had.

So I marched up to Joe, took him by the arm and led him to the door in a silence like the grave. No one moved to see even if I had killed my man. All I ever heard of him after was that they took him to a hospital and said he had fallen down-stairs. It doesn't pay that kind of gentry to go to the courts if they can help it. Once outside, the cold air and rain sobered Joe a bit.

"All right, Bill," he said, "let go. I'll go home."

Like a fool, I did so. Suddenly he caught sight of poor shivering Jennie, and before I could stop him, he had rushed at her, hit her fair between the eyes, and sent her flying into the mud and darkness. Then jerking his hand from his trousers pocket, he hurled a handful of gold

at her with an oath. The man was mad with the poison he had been drinking.

The end of poor Joe doesn't concern this narrative: suffice it to say that some of us saw him safely through this time at home. But such cases were all too frequent, and the mission was at length forced to take up work ashore, in order to supplement the work of the ships at sea. Now there are fine institutes for deep-sea fishermen only, at all their chief ports. Everything is done to make them at home. There they can find beds, food, lockers to leave their clothes in, games, clubs, savings-banks—everything. Each is managed by a fisherman who has been well known to the men at sea as a first-class cook, and a cheerful, clean-living, Christian man, and one who loves to yarn about the fish as much as the fishermen do themselves. Thus quite a number of the young fellows lodge always at these places, and as they pay for all they get, they need feel no less pride in spending money there than many a poor fool does in standing treat in those dens of iniquity they used to be driven to. In fact, these institutes are run on common-sense principles, and are almost entirely self-supporting after once they get under way.

Here again the loving self-sacrifice of ladies has been of untold value. More than one has freely given her life to the service of the fishermen, and is reaping the reward of as sincere a love and devotion as a warm-hearted, generous lot of men (forgive me, reader, if I seem egotistic) are capable of giving. May God abundantly bless them, say I, for all their devotion. One of the direct results of this work has been the shutting up of numbers of these hells, for the best of all reasons—the want of custom. A United Fishermen's Christian Association has done admirable work, establishing, among other things, homes for aged fishermen, unfit to cope longer with the vicissitudes of the only calling they are fitted for. One can't fancy an old fisherman driving one's carriage, and trying to tack in a crowded street, or exploiting a knowledge of seaweeds and shell-fish in one's flower garden. His chances of saving for an old age have not been increased by an early marriage; though that was almost essential, if there was to be one spot on God's earth that he could call home when he returned from the hardship, peril and monotony of his long banishments from his native land. Better far for a fisherman who has "passed his

day," to join the great majority of the comrades of his younger days, sleeping their last peaceful sleep beneath the surface of the boundless deep, than to suffer the miseries of a poverty-stricken and neglected old age. For to the aged deep-sea fisherman a grateful country awards only the stigma of the poorhouse, and the uniform that brands him as a pauper.

These old folks' homes, though, alas! all too few, are at least run on the right lines. Each inmate has his own allowance, and spends his money as he likes best within the most liberal limits. And in front of each is a small plot of grass or cabbages with the traditional tarry paling at the end, giving to their failing eyesight till the very last a vision of that mighty deep on which they have lived and that has so long paid tribute to their skill and courage.

The spiritual work of the mission is still done by the fishermen themselves, aided by such volunteer evangelists as choose to come out, and whose very presence, for no pecuniary return whatever, is itself a guarantee that they believe they have a message worth coming out to deliver. Steam has replaced sail power in these

last few years, and the mission has had to sell its sailing hospitals, and replace them with the expensive modern steam fishing-boats and hospitals that cost no less than sixty thousand dollars a piece —one of them being the gift of a zealous member of the Council. They are fitted with steam-heating, electric lights, Roentgen ray apparatus, and every modern requirement. But the spiritual work, as I have said, is still done voluntarily. It is not the fishermen's wealth of language, nor their doctrinal orthodoxy, nor their rhetorical skill, that makes them the best men to do the work. It is their simple, unwavering faith, their intense earnestness and practicality in all they do. Their lives, too, which are known and read by all their congregation, are credentials not to be gainsaid. Hence it is that they achieve to-day results more nearly apostolic than we are accustomed to see in our churches on the land.

XV

OFF The COAST of LABRADOR

ABOUT this time one of the Council of the Mission, on his way to Canada, heard a good deal about the great number of fishermen catching cod and halibut and herring and seals off the northwest Atlantic coast. He returned by way of Newfoundland, to find out more about them.

All their ways are very different from ours. They do not send their fish to market fresh, but salt it; nor can they keep the sea all winter, owing to the ice that comes down from the Arctic regions. A number of the men go to the great fishing banks, using long lines as has been so well described in "Captains Courageous." As soon as the break up of the ice makes it possible, a much larger number start out in almost every sort of sailing craft, for the banks and shoals off the rocky coast of Labrador. They return in the fall, when the ice begins to form again, having been away from May to October. In the spring



"ALMOST EVERY SORT OF SAILING CRAFT"

of the year, from every nook and cove small vessels are to be seen working their way out among the ice pans, carrying down not only the men and boys, but the women and children as well, and all the household utensils, furniture, bedding, and food and every requisite for the long summer's fishing. All these are to be dropped at some natural harbour on the Labrador coast, where there is a rude tilt, and probably a small fishing stage, left from the previous year; and here one crew, or it may be a dozen, will form a small settlement and fish from that place in boats which they leave here from year to year. A single crew remains on the schooner, and goes on a fishing trip further north. At the end of the voyage with all the fish, split and salted, stowed away in the hold, this solitary crew returns to the station. The men that have remained are called "stationers"; the others are green-fish catchers.

The crews are formed by a skipper shipping a number of men to go with him, usually his sons or other relations. An agreement is made with some merchant to give them what they need to fit out the vessel and all hands for the venture. There are no apprentices among them. The men often build their own schooners, for they

are obliged to be very handy men; and any one can go out and cut down whatever timber he wants for fishery purposes. In return for the outfit, the skipper sells—or, as they say, "turns in"—all the fish he catches to "his merchant." He is then given his account. If anything is due to him, it must by law be paid in cash. But as a matter of fact it very seldom is. The skipper "takes up" in the merchant's store what he needs for the winter, and to get his gear in order again for the next summer. A man who thus takes out a supply is called a "planter."

The troubles of this system are very real. The merchant has to run a great risk. He lets out, in the form of goods, large sums of money, which he has to borrow from the bank. If the fishing is bad, he may never be paid at all, because the planters cannot meet their debts. Again, if they can just pay, still the merchant is expected to make another advance for the winter. If the summer fishing is very good, the price of fish falls, and things are then perhaps worse than ever, the fish not paying the cost of storing and making and sending to market. Or, again, a fisherman may be tempted to sell his fish elsewhere, when he sees that he will have noth-

ing coming to him after the settling, and fears that no advances will be made to him for his family for the winter. In these ways many of the merchants have been ruined. And a few years ago the banks that they owed their own advances to, went bankrupt as a result. Thus the supplying merchants have to demand a great margin of profit on the goods they supply, if they are to make ends meet. While this favours the man who does *not* pay, it handicaps very seriously the man who does. The whole "truck system," as it is called, is a ruinous one in every way. It has been exceedingly difficult for the country to throw it off, as the long winter of more or less enforced idleness has kept the fishermen continually in debt. Of late years, however, the opening of mines, and the starting of pulp and lumber mills and other industries, have been slowly enabling a number of the fishermen to get free. To be born in debt, to live in debt, and to die in debt, has been the lot of many a Newfoundland fisherman. On the other hand, these men have advantages denied their fellows in the old country. They can build and own their own houses, they can get all the fire-wood they need, and they have no rates to pay, as we

have. They have long periods when they are entirely their own masters, when they can do just as they like, and they have much more time to enjoy life than we have, especially since the steam trawling began. Indeed, they can enjoy many pleasures that are reserved for the rich in our country.

The following story of a Labrador fisherman's life explains what their lot is, better than I could do it in any other way.

XVI

The LABRADORMAN'S STORY

AS long as I can remember, I have been going every year to the Labrador fishery, and since I have been strong enough, every winter to the ice, hunting seals. Indeed, I was born in the cabin of a fishing-schooner, as she lay in the ice off the coast, on her way to the summer fishery. My grandfather came out from Dorsetshire in England, with one of the great Jersey fishing firms, and my father also followed the fishery till he was lost in his own vessel with all hands, coming from St. Johns late one fall. A heavy gale blew the schooner off the coast, and she was no doubt lost through her running rigging getting coated with ice, and so becoming unmanageable.

There were six of us boys, until two were lost with my father; and then I was left the second oldest, so that the care of the family developed partly on me at the age of fifteen. The insurance on the schooner, and the nets and gear my father

left, enabled us to continue going to Labrador as usual. The neighbours, also, lent us every possible help, as the custom is amongst Newfoundlanders.

Our hardest work in winter was hauling the fire-wood. For this we had six fine dogs. These were my special care. Making their harness and the komatik, or sleigh, and feeding the dogs and driving them to and fro from the woods, was always more play than work to me. Still, when you had been at it from daylight to dark, cutting one day and hauling the next, you were always able to do your share of sleeping. A boy has to learn to handle an axe as soon as he can walk out here, and some say we are born with netting needles in our hands. "Netting" used to occupy all our spare moments, and it was little time for school I ever had, as both salmon and cod twine had to be got ready.

Whenever I could get half a chance I was away gunning. In the fall we used to shoot ducks from our punt. We started out before daylight and rowed out to the head-of-land. Just at dawn the birds come flying along, and many a morning I have bagged a dozen by breakfast-time. Then seldom a fall went by that



"THE NEIGHBOURS"

we did not get a few deer. For though we only used a large muzzle-loading shotgun, she used to carry a ball well; and deer were plentiful at that time. All that we shot was frozen down in barrels with snow, and thus made to keep all winter. What pride I used to take in seeing our wood-pile grow under my hand,—and in seeing my mother's pleasure when we brought home game for the larder! Then we had always a few sheep to feed and tend. As soon as we returned from the fishery in Labrador, we had to go up in the bay and cut wild hay for them. This we heaped up and covered with boughs till we were ready to haul it home in winter. Then we built some sort of a boat almost every winter, and for this we had to fell the timber and saw the planks with a large pit-saw. We had also the rabbit-slips to tend, and every winter there were the fox-traps to tail and watch,—that is, whenever we could find time to work them.

By the end of February we had to be fitting out, if we were going to the ice after seals. In old times we always went in the schooners. These had to be cut out from the winter ice, rigged and victualled, and every man had to get ready his gaff, knife, steel and hauling-rope.

Nowadays it is all done in the great sealing steamers, each carrying from two to three hundred men. So now we have to walk, or work our way, as best we can, to the nearest place we can get a chance to ship. That used to be, generally, at St. Johns, and this involved a long journey, often two or three weeks being necessary, as there was scarcely any railway till within the last few years.

Though we made very little by it, somehow we all looked forward to the "ice-hunting," as we called it. For all of us, but especially we younger fellows, enjoyed the excitement and even the risks. Indeed, laws had to be passed to prevent the schooners from sailing before it was necessary, as our men do not know what fear is when "swiles are about." So vessels must now report on the day fixed by law, to show that they have not taken an unfair advantage by leaving too early. It is said that on a certain part of our coast where wrecks were common, distress guns were heard once during a Sunday morning sermon. There was a momentary silence, till the parson could assure himself that he was not mistaken. Then, seeing some of the congregation reaching for their hats, he ordered the sexton to

hut the door till the sermon was over. Then he aid to the congregation, "No, no, boys; let's ll start fair." Hastily winding up the service, he raced off at the head of the congregation. So it is every year with the seal fishery. We are all keen to get there, but we all have to "start fair." So winter is a busy time with us after all, and in spite of the cold we like it best of all the seasons.

After the sealery, however, comes the really busy time. The schooner has to be scraped and caulked over and painted, and the nets overhauled and put on board. All the things for the summer-house in Labrador have to be stowed, and finally the people shipped and made as comfortable as possible. Generally we have to go all the way to St. Johns first, for supplies of food. But usually we are away, at the very latest, by early June. Often enough the voyage will run into a whole fortnight before we reach our harbour, away down on the Atlantic coast, though we always race as hard as we can, to get a good place to put our trap net down. This is a much more important point than you would suppose, for we cannot take our nets to the fish, and therefore have to place them where the fish are

sure to pass. So great is the excitement, that the Government has had to pass a law forbidding any mark to be put out claiming a "trap berth," as it is called, before a certain day and hour. For there is a temptation to run great risks in forcing the small schooners through the ice before it is safe. Even now, men will stay out on the best points till midnight, waiting till the hour has struck, to put out their mark, claiming a berth for the year.

At the beginning of the season we fish for salmon, setting long nets from the heads, with a kind of "pound" at the end. In these the salmon mesh. When caught, they are split down the back, salted, and stowed in large barrels called tierces, and sent to the United States to be washed and smoked, and sold as smoked salmon. Soon however the salmon have passed into the rivers, and then there arrive great shoals of small fish, the size of sardines. These come in such immense quantities that the water is black with them, and they herald the arrival of the "fish." (Salmon is salmon; but when we speak of cod, we call it simply "fish.") These small fish are called capelin, and the cod pursue them till they run high and dry on the shore.



"CAPELIN RUN HIGH AND DRY ON THE SHORE"

Every year we see great wallowing masses of fish following the capelin in. This is called the "capelin school," and when it comes we expect to reap our harvest.

It is a glorious sight to see, this arrival of the fish. Overhead the marvellous transparent sky; below, the glassy surface of the dark blue ocean; here and there the fantastic shapes of great mountains of ice, dazzling the eye with a whiteness which far exceeds that of the whitest marble. Behind are the mighty cliffs, their jagged faces telling the story of their endless battles at first with fire, and then with frost and furious seas. Along the shores is the great host of eager fishermen.

Suddenly the water is alive. Everywhere the dense masses are "breaching" the surface, which a moment ago was so still and deathlike. Birds flying and diving follow in their wake, with seals and porpoises, sharks and whales, and countless hosts of lean and hungry cod. Ashore even, the wild animals are expecting them, and dogs, and bears, otters and minks, are hurrying to the landwash to share in the great annual feast, that comes, like the rain, to good and bad alike. Our net is a great room of twine, anchored down on

the bottom by the four corners. There is also a long straight net running to the rocks. This is called the "leader," because as the shoals of cod swim along past the rocks, it leads them right into the door. The net is so shaped, that once inside, they never get back to the entrance, but go on swimming round and round. The fishermen keep a watch on the shore, and are soon off in the large trap-boat. Then they look down with a water telescope, and if they see any fish they pull up the door and empty the trap. It is in this way we catch the enormous number of fish necessary to make a living. The fish when dried and "tallied in" to the merchant on our return are sent to the Mediterranean and Brazilian markets, and to the West Indies.

We have other methods also for catching "fish," for we use nets in which they will mesh, and also "bultos," or long lines fitted with thousands of hooks. On a fine calm day, as you haul up the bulto you can look over the side far down into the deep water, and see great white things every few yards down, getting smaller and smaller till you can see them no more. They are all swirling to and fro, and make one think of Jacob's ladder with the angels on it, though



"THEY ARE REALLY THE GREAT COD"

they are really the great cod—which are only taken in deep water—coming up on the hooks.

Having landed our "freighters," as we call every one we carry down to stations in Labrador, we trim the ship and go either into the Straits of Belle Isle or the Gulf of St. Lawrence, or else we push on farther north.

XVII

The LABRADOR ESKIMO and The MORAVIAN MISSIONARIES

THERE are a number of fisherfolk, who live all the year in the southern and eastern part of Labrador. As a rule they are very poor, being cut off from every possible way of helping themselves to rise. They are descended from old hunters of the Hudson Bay Company, and they live by fishing and trapping, as we do. We call them "Liveyeres," because they live on the coast.

Then still further north are the Eskimo—a queer merry little brown people, with jet-black hair, which they cut in a fringe straight across the forehead. They are almost always fat and jolly, though we cannot understand how they manage to be so, seeing the way they live. In winter they hunt seal and bear and walrus and narwhal, living in houses built of snow. On the edge of the ice, as they travel about, they make everything they want out of a seal. That is one reason we always admire them so: they

seem to make so many things out of nothing. The skin makes them clothing, and tents, and coverings for their kayaks or canoes, harness and traces for their dogs, lines for their harpoons, and bladders for floats. The intestines blown up and dried like sausage-covers make jugs for oil, and flasks for powder and shot, which they can buy now at the stores. They also sew the bowel very neatly and make perfectly water-proof clothing out of it; and as it is half transparent they make the window-glass for their houses and tents of it. They eat the meat and the blubber or fat, which they also use in lamps, carved out of a soft soapstone that is found on the coast. They make the wicks out of moss, which is flat and close from having grown in the narrow fissures between the rocks. The hide of the walrus they cut up for rope, in strips fully an inch thick, and as strong as a hemp hawser. This has lots of "give" in it, which adds to its strength. The great ivory tusks are used to weight and tip their harpoons. Many a stone kettle and lamp and arrow-head have I picked up in Labrador, for the Eskimo managed to kill all they needed in old days with stone implements. They make queer graves, too. There

is no earth to bury their dead in, so they just heap up stones on their ends, and put flat ones on the top. This is done in order that the spirits may look out. They always place a man's possessions on the ground by the grave, for they think that everything has a spirit, even a stone knife. The grave is put on a headland, usually overlooking the sea where the man used to hunt. Thus, when his spirit wants to hunt, it will find everything ready.

The Eskimo are very honest and seldom if ever steal: indeed, they hold most things almost in common. I never knew one to let another go hungry, even if it took the very last bit he had to feed him. When we are "away down north" fishing, these little fellows love to come on board. They never seem to be in a hurry, and we should be apt to say they are idle; but they say, "If we get enough, why should we worry about getting more?" When they want to buy anything from us they bring us the seal-skin boots that they make. These are all sewn most beautifully with the tendon from the reindeer's back, so that they are perfectly water-tight; and they are so soft that one's feet move freely in

them. This makes them very warm, and so we value them for the ice hunting. The Eskimo like very much to get our trap-boats, for wood is very scarce with them. Last summer a man called Annanak, came round Cape Chidley in his oomiak, or woman-boat. It was almost square and quite flat-bottomed. It had a perfectly square sail of sealskin in the middle, and the man's two wives were rowing with two large oars made from pieces of drift-wood he had picked up in Hudson's Bay. He himself did the steering. There were in the boat, all told, no less than nineteen people, six dogs, and about a ton of seal oil, that he was carrying up to a Hudson's Bay Company's post to sell. Another Eskimo bought our trap-boat for twenty-six pairs of skin boots. I wish every one felt as happy and as rich as he did, when he went off, the owner of his own wooden boat.

For over one hundred years Moravian missionaries from Germany have lived in Labrador among the Eskimo. They have built churches and schools for them, and taught them to read, write, play music and sing beautifully. They love singing, as every one does who has a con-

tented mind. The Moravians are a trading mission, selling the Eskimo what they need, and receiving in return their fur and oil. Of late, also, they have encouraged the Eskimo to catch "fish." An Eskimo man thought it beneath his dignity to do any such work, formerly. The Moravians live all their lives on these barren shores, cut off from all the world, just for the sake of the Eskimo. There is no chance for their children to get on in Labrador, and this is the chief sacrifice the "Brethren," as they are called, have to make. For when one of their children comes to be seven years old, they have to send it home in the missionary ship *Harmony*, which comes once a year to bring food and supplies, and they may never see the child any more. Such is the danger of not having food in this ice-bound country, that two years' supplies have to be kept on hand, ready for the day when perhaps some accident may happen to the *Harmony*, and she may not arrive. It is one hundred and thirty-one years since the first ship *Harmony* sailed for Labrador. She has had to cross the wildest part of the wild Atlantic twice every year since, contending with wintry gales,

and towering icebergs, and the densest fogs anywhere in the world. Wars with other nations have raged, and countless other vessels have been seized and stripped and sunk; but all these years the *Harmony* has always come safely, and the humble Brethren in Labrador have never yet had to draw on their reserve stock of provisions.

XVIII

HOW WE Did WITHOUT a DOCTOR

THERE are perhaps no healthier people anywhere, than are we fisherfolk. And perhaps there is no healthier place than Labrador, so the doctors in Newfoundland often send their patients to Labrador for the summer, where the bracing air, the freedom from infectious germs and the sea-life make new men of worn-out material. Some twenty thousand people are spread out all along a thousand miles of coast for about five months of the year, and about three thousand stay there throughout the winter. Many are born, live and die there. The industry they pursue especially exposes them to accident, and in particular to cuts, sea-boils and ulcers from the poisoned water round their stages, where a small wound or even scratch often leads to abscess, gangrene and loss of part of a hand. Yet no doctor ever lived in Labrador, and the only help of that kind ever attainable was from the doctor on the small mail-steamer, which

makes flying visits at very uncertain periods about nine times in the summer. I need not say how much unnecessary suffering had to be borne, and how many limbs or lives lost that might have been saved.

It would amuse you, if I were to write you a record of the various ways we used to treat our ailments. I think they may all be put down under the heading of "faith cures." Certain people were supposed to be able to charm tooth-ache, and all inward pains arising from no visible cause. Many is the time I have been "charmed" as a boy. I am alive and strong still, thank God, but whether it was the charming that saved me, or the quantity of brimstone that mother insisted on my swallowing, I do not know; but of one thing I am certain: I had to be very bad indeed before I let mother guess I needed medicine. If a man was badly cut and there was no way to stop the bleeding, we filled the wound with cut tobacco, and if that didn't stop it, with dry flour. I have picked up sacks of flour from a wrecked vessel that have floated in the sea for over a week, and the water has only soaked through about a quarter of an inch. For a poultice for swellings every one used the "tansy" plant, a

common large yellow flower with green leaves. I can smell the sickly odour of it now! for more than a haycock of it, all told, has been plastered onto my own sores, at times. If it was thought necessary that a poultice should "draw well," it was made of soap and molasses, for sugar was an article we seldom saw. As this was applied to ulcers and open sores, you can well imagine what it looked and felt like in a day or two, as it kept all the poisons in. But it was said to be so powerful it would draw your head to your heels, if only applied in the right place. All fevers were put down to "taking a chill," and the remedy was to take the reverse. That meant stewing the sick one over the hot stoves we use, in the small and crowded kitchens, and keeping out every possible whiff of fresh air. How many of those I have known, that have died of consumption, have been thus done to death with kindness, I should be afraid to guess. For it was of course thought equally impossible to expose the skin for washing, in the same circumstances.

Plasters are always a greatly-prized remedy. I have known a man to wear six plasters at a time, including one on his face—for headache! A plaster may be made of anything that will stick,

and must be left on till it falls off. The best of all was made of stuff called "dragon's blood": it was supposed to contain great virtue for strengthening. Such were many of our resources in sickness, and they would be comical, were they not often so tragical, and of such vital importance to us. Thus, on one occasion diphtheria was somehow brought to us. A poor fellow near me saw all his three children taken down with it. What to do he did not know; nor did any of us know what was the matter. We knew it was "catching" and fatal, for many had died of it. This man's only remedy was to blister the throat outside, which he did by tying round it a salt herring. It blistered the throat all right, but of course did not save the boy. As soon as he found his second boy was choking and could swallow nothing, the poor father thought he needed something to "break the velum," so he tried greasing the inside of the throat with the rounded end of a tallow candle. All the three children died the same day. One poor father on another occasion came home in the winter to his house, where he had left his wife sick in bed, and found that his little five-year-old girl had toddled out unobserved, and had not returned. When

he found her, her legs below the knees were badly frost-burned. They turned quite black and dead, and he was himself obliged to cut them both off with the only instrument he had—his axe.

The little mail steamer used to take on board and carry home to Newfoundland any fishermen supposed to be dying. No special provision was made for him or her on board, and I heard the captain say once that seventeen he had thus carried had just "died where they lay." It often meant also a very serious loss to a humane skipper, for if one of his hands fell sick on the passage down, he was always in a great doubt as to what he ought to do. If he went on it meant perhaps suffering and death to the man, and if he went back it meant perhaps poverty and want for all their families next winter. Then, too, in the tiny tilts there could be no provision for sick women and children. There was little enough for them when they were well. Many of the green-fish catchers also carried girls as extra help, for their labour was much cheaper than a man's. If they were overtaken with sickness in these small and crowded cabins, what comfort, what chance—nay, what decency,—could there be for them? I remember well a

man losing one of his boys from scarlet fever in the cabin of his small schooner, just as she reached her station far down on the north coast of Labrador. All who die are carried home in the fall, and gruesome as it may seem, the child was carried back, preserved in salt, in the same vessel with a number of healthy people. What safety was possible for those poor folk? And yet, what were we able to do?

XIX

"PREACH The WORD—HEAL The SICK"

THE summer of 1892 was a hard one on the fishermen. Scarcely had we reached Labrador and begun fishing, when we learnt that a terrible fire had occurred in St. Johns, destroying virtually the whole city. We all suffered directly or indirectly, and my own prospects were rendered still more gloomy by the fact that we had done very badly with the fish during June and July. We had now sailed down as far north as we usually go, when the girl that I had shipped for the summer took ill. She was very bad indeed with inflammation of the lungs. I was terribly put to it, to know what to do. If I wanted fish, we must go on further from home; yet if I did not get help somewhere, the girl might die in the dark uncomfortable bunk in our schooner's little cabin. It almost meant ruin to go back without enough fish to pay for the supplies we had had this summer; for I could scarcely expect the merchant to give us a

winter's diet, after he had just had all his supplies burnt up. Between anxiety for the future and anxiety for the girl, I was almost driven out of my mind, for we had no comforts for the sick on board, or medicines either, nor should we have known how to use them if we had had them. Any chance of forgetting one's troubles even in sleep were denied me, for who could sleep in hearing of the constant moaning of a person whose life he was responsible for, in the same little cabin where his own bunk was?

It was the 18th of August, and the wind was in the nor'west, blowing strong out of the bay. Our boys had just come in from the trap—unsuccessful again, and I was walking up and down on deck, ready to throw myself over the side, as a skipper did last summer, in Makkovik harbour, after tying the kedge anchor round his neck, when I noticed a very large and smart ketch-rigged vessel come round the souther head, and stand into the bay. She sailed like a witch, and was no vessel I had ever seen on the Labrador coast before. Every line of her was English from her truck to her cut-water, though she was smart enough to be an American pleasure yacht.

As I watched her she tacked and bore up for

our harbour. I saw then she carried too much beam for the extra "half knot per hour" that all pleasure-seekers sacrifice so much for. No, she was built for keeping the sea, that was evident; and what was more, she had recently been sheathed to stand ice. What could she be? I had never seen the like of her. A few minutes later she hove up in the wind and let go her two anchors. "Never been here before," I thought, as I heard the skipper shout out to "let go a' port." He evidently had been afraid of our coast.

"Come, boys, out boat! Let's go aboard, and see what she is, anyhow."

You may be sure we took notice of all her points as we rowed towards her. Just as we crossed her bow to get at the ladder on the far side, 'Lije (that's my trap-master) sang out,

"She's got a good name, anyhow—hasn't she, skipper?"

It seemed an odd name to me. There, carved in letters of gold on her starboard rail, were the words, *Preach the Word.* But, odder still, on her port rail, in the same place, were the words, *Heal the Sick.*

As we made fast to the side, the skipper came

to the rail and gave us a fisherman's welcome. "What cheer, friend? Glad to see you. Come aboard!"

As I think of it now, he must have thought me an odd fish. For once on board, I stood like a stuck pig, with my mouth open, trying to take her in. Teak decks and hatches, iron skylights, pitch-pine spars throughout, brass pumps as clean as new pins,—surely, she must be a pleasure yacht, after all. I began to be sorry I had trespassed in coming aboard. Yet there was engraved on her great oak wheel words I had never seen on a ship's wheel before: "Jesus saith, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

"Can't make us out, eh?" said the skipper at last, who had been watching me all the time with an amused smile.

"No, sir," I answered; "she is the first of her kind I ever set eyes on."

"Come below and have a look at her, and see if you can make her out then."

She was as trim below as on deck. Her large hold was grained and varnished. The ballast-deck was covered with oilcloth, and there was an harmonium there. A large cabin, right across

the ship amidships, was brightly done up with panels of pitch-pine and walnut. Eight beds in it were covered with bright-coloured quilts. Two of these were on pivots and swung to and fro with the rolling of the ship—or, rather, stood still while the deck swayed beneath them.

"That's our hospital," said the skipper.

"Hospital! You haven't got a doctor aboard, have you?"

"Why of course we have," he replied; "do you want to see him?"

"Well, we have a girl aboard our schooner, who is dying. Do you think he would come aboard and see her?"

"You had better ask him yourself," said the skipper; and without wasting a moment, he knocked at a door in the after end of the hospital, and said,

"Doctor, there's a man here wants to see you."

In half a minute a young doctor was shaking me by the hand, saying,

"Well, skipper, glad to see you. What can I do for you?"

"We've only got very poor accommodation, doctor," I replied, "but our girl is very sick, and

I thought you might be kind enough to come and tell us what to do for her."

"Of course I will, skipper. Why, that's what we are sent here for. To show how grateful we are for what the Master did for us, by trying to do the same for others. Come along. No time like the present."

So this was the mission-ship! We had heard some talk of one coming, but had thought it only one of the idle rumours of the coast.

XX

WHAT The HOSPITAL SHIP MEANT to LABRADOR

SOME people say "missions?—missions are all cant." In half an hour our girl was in that beautiful little hospital. *She* didn't find much cant about *this* mission, anyhow! For if there is no heaven hereafter, that hospital was very like heaven to her here, after what she had gone through in our poor cabin. Moreover, when the mission-ship went on her way, the girl went with her, and stayed aboard till she got well in that little hospital, though the doctor said she had "New Moanier." Then they gave her a passage home in the mail steamer. And I know her old father and mother didn't find any cant about it, when Mary told them how it all happened. And what's more, I know I didn't, either. For from that day things took a turn with us. We fell in with the fish, and made a saving voyage of it after all. "May He who gives all good gifts reward those who helped to send her out,"

say I. And many a hundred fishermen have said the same since that day.

For the mission-ship did not come only to doctor up sick people. While she lay in the harbours, any one was welcome aboard. You could play a game there, when times were slack; and not a few took advantage of the chance, I'm glad to say. For idle hands are as dangerous here as anywhere. Then the reading she gave out! It wasn't just all one kind: you could get what people call "light reading"—though I know it must have weighed a good many tons! Then she had a pile of sermons in what they called their "woollen lockers." Our work is often bitterly cold; for if the water isn't cold enough in itself, there are always the icebergs to prevent its getting over hot. Moreover, Labrador isn't a great country for grazing sheep, and though we have one or two head when we can, and card and spin and knit our own mits and helmets and underwear,—when a woman has a lot of children, *some one* has to go short, and mits and mufflers are never over plentiful, while I have seen many a poor fellow without any at all. Yes, and I have also seen them without stockings under their boots. The mission-ship found many in that

plight, the road to whose hearts could be reached with a quiet little gift of some much needed woollens; while the great sea-boot stockings, such as they use in the North Sea, were a revelation to all of us.

Every evening prayers were held aboard, and of course you could stay or go just as you liked. They were just simple "fishermen's meetings." The doctor or the skipper led the service, or perhaps one of the crew, if the others were busy. Some of us found this the best part of all the work she tried to do. The meetings were the means of opening up a new life to many a man who before had only thought of himself and pleasing his own desires. More than one of my friends started there to try and "do the thing that pleaseth Thee," as the Psalm says. Some five years after, the doctor was aboard me again to see one of my men, who was laid up. As he was going, the man said:

"You evidently don't remember me, Doctor."

"No, I can't say I do. Did I ever see you before?"

"Yes, sir; you did. Don't you mind two men, who decided to serve the Lord one night, after

service on the rocks at Paul's Island? I was one of those men, sir."

"Well, what difference has it made to you?"

The man was silent for a bit, and then said, "Perhaps you had better ask my wife, sir. The skipper here ought to know, too. He lives near me at home. Anyhow, if I have to die down here this time, I'm not afraid."

As the doctor came on deck he took me aside, and asked me,

"How about the man's life at home?"

"He has been a different man, these last five years. I wish you could see the difference it has made in his home," I answered quite truly. "You did more for him and his then, than you'll ever do again, even if you do pull him through this sickness."

I didn't see any more of the mission-ship that summer, after she left where I was fishing, but I heard she did just the same all along the coast. The only pity of it was (so it seemed to me) that like angel's visits, hers were so few and far between. In the fall, however, when the winter weather drove us all south again, as our schooner lay in St. Johns discharging her fish and getting supplies to take home for the winter,—there, sure

enough, close alongside us lay the mission-ship. She was getting stowed away for the long voyage home across the Atlantic, and every night a lot of her newly found friends were aboard her, I among them, you may be sure. Would she come back? That was what we all wanted to know.

A great number of the fishermen got talking to their merchants about her, so quite an interest was created in her in St. Johns, and at last the Governor himself called a big meeting to see what could be done. All the chief merchants and planters were there, and passed a resolution to be sent home to those who sent the ship out, saying that they would gladly subscribe towards the expense, if only she were sent again. The doctor told them at the meeting that he had treated nine hundred sick and injured fishermen, and showed the books that every one might see the kind of cases he was called on to help, with the name and address of every fisherman he had treated. But there were some things he said would have to be done, if the ship ever came again, and the best was to be expected of her. The cliffs in Labrador are very high, and there are no tugboats to help a sailing vessel in or out



"MANY OF THE PATIENTS WERE NOT FIT TO BE LEFT"

of the long and often very narrow fjords. A steamer or a steam launch attached to the ship would enable her to do ten times the work in the same time. Then again, many of the patients were not fit to be left, and could not be sent home, and yet there were too many for the little hospital on the ship. Many besides, who were badly in need of help, didn't know where to go to find the mission-ship. So a shore hospital was sorely needed to assist the work. Then again, there was no possible way of nursing the cases properly on board, especially if they were infectious, or if some severe operation had to be performed; so a trained nurse was needed, if we fishermen were to hope to get such treatment as those who stayed at home and never went out to enrich the colony, should get in the hospital at St. Johns. It was plain, also, that a great source of immediate loss in money might be stayed, if some of the sick were able to go and get cured in a week or two, and then go back to the fishing, instead of being sent far south to their homes, losing the whole season.

Some meetings end in talk, but this one didn't. The merchants at once promised to pay for the erection of two such little hospitals, if the mis-

sion would take over the management and keep them working. One merchant, indeed, said that he was prepared to give a new house at a place called Battle Harbour for the first hospital. When the mission-ship at length got up her anchors and spread her sails for the homeward voyage, she carried with her the letters from that meeting, signed by the Governor and all the leading men. Would she come back or not? That was the question I and many others asked ourselves, more than once that winter.

XXI

WHERE POVERTY MEANS STARVATION

THE long winter went at last, and once again we ran our schooner into St. Johns to fit out for Labrador. You can judge how glad I was when, as we bore up to anchor, we saw right ahead of us floating in the stream, the mission hospital ship. There she was, with all her bunting flying, and above all the rest the broad blue burgee, with " Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen " in white letters on it; and lying alongside was a smart little steam launch, the *Princess May*, flying the same token. When I went aboard I found that she was just out, and that two more doctors had come to us, and two nurses also, for the two little mission hospitals, which those in the old country had decided to accept and work. They were to be two hundred miles apart on the Atlantic coast, one just on the north side of the Straits of Belle Isle, and the other at the entrance to Hamilton Inlet. The news soon flashed along the coast, perhaps

none the slower for there being no regular telegraph or other means of communication. More than one poor fisherman who feared to start for so long a cruise, if he could not be near any help till he returned, put out for Labrador with an easy mind, while many a mother going down to the far-off fishing station, did so with a confidence she had never enjoyed before.

But now that the people began to know what it meant to be able to get to a doctor in the summer when they were in pain or sickness, those who stay in Labrador were anxious to get a place kept open in the winter, that they could go to for help. There were often cases where poor men died for want of knowledge what to do. Thus at one place on the coast, a man was hunting when his gun went off and shot him in the shoulder. A good friend stopped the bleeding by packing up the hole with a stocking; but a week later it began again, and the man lost his life, and left six children behind him. Then again, when another man shot himself in the elbow, all they could do was to tie it up with cold water. As a result he lost his right arm,—and what is a fisherman able to do without a right arm? Ever since, his family has lived from hand to mouth

on the charity of neighbours. Of course, some said that people couldn't get to a hospital in winter, as the sea is frozen then. But the doctor said he was willing to stay and see what could be done. So when every one else started for home, the doctor was left on Caribou Island, and half the mission crew said that was the last they expected to see of him. He set to work in earnest, however, and not only was alive in the spring, but had travelled twelve hundred miles with his dogs, and visited far and wide up and down the coast.

The southern hospital has never been closed since that day. Indeed, it has been doubled in size, and is now full to overflowing all the summer long, while once in winter seven komatiks, drawn by over sixty dogs, accompanied the doctor back to hospital one day, each carrying a patient.

The hardest thing the doctor found to contend with, was the great poverty of the settlers in the winter, and the diseases that arose from lack of proper food. Every spring he met with cases of true scurvy, the disease that once carried off so many of the sailors on their long voyages to the Spanish main, but is seldom or never seen in civilized countries nowadays. More than once

the food he was carrying along for his dogs, had to be shared with the children of the house he was visiting. The reason was not far to seek. The settlers when they made a good voyage were unable to save, for never being paid in cash they were tempted to take up a lot of unnecessary articles, rather than "leave on the books" with their trader that rather visionary possession known as "a balance coming to you." Thus in bad seasons there was nothing to fall back on, while at the same time what is known as "credit prices" were always booked against them. Moreover, after a bad season, unless they were good furriers, they could earn nothing in winter. It was unavoidable, therefore, that the men with large families were either hungry or overwhelmed with debt.

I was sitting, one autumn day, on the end of a long, rocky promontory over which the southern-flying ducks are always waylaid, when a nor'easter blows the fog in, and makes the birds fly close to the land. There is no more exciting time, perhaps, for about twenty men, all with long, large-bore guns, await the immense flocks that suddenly emerge from the fog, whirl like lightning over the cape, and disappear again. On this day

there sat behind me one of the men I had always known as the keenest lover of his gun; yet with his head resting on his bent-up knees, he was looking vacantly into space. His gun, which he had brought along from habit, was lying unloaded on the rocks beside him. It was "settling-day" with his merchant, and he had done badly that summer.

"What, not shooting, Jim?" I asked. "Surely, you aren't going to let them all off, are you?"

"What's the good?" he replied. "I've got to starve anyhow."

"What's the matter now?" I said.

"The matter is, I've got nothing for the winter, and what few ducks I can kill won't keep my kids alive."

"What's the balance against you?" I asked.

"Something over three thousand dollars," he answered.

"Three thousand *what!*" I exclaimed.

"Dollars," he jerked out, mechanically.

I thought to myself there must be some mistake; but I found out afterwards that there was no mistake at all, for when the great crash took place, and so many merchant firms went bankrupt, the debts to the firm at this one place were

stated in the assets as "Outstanding debts at this Harbour, $64,000. Value, *nil*." The credit system, though impossible to get rid of at a moment's notice, was injurious to all who practiced it. The doctor got hopeless of curing folk whom he had to send back to chronic starvation, and of cruel cases of tubercular diseases in so many young children, in a climate where there is no excuse for the *tubercle bacillus*, except the miserable poverty of the people.

Could anything be done to preach the gospel, on economic lines? Or should he be satisfied to work away with his eyes tightly closed, trying to undo what he saw would all be done over again directly he had reached the end of his tether? At least no one could blame him for trying. Should he go on preaching the salvation of the soul in the next world, while he witnessed the damnation of the body in this, without making an effort to mitigate the situation, however feeble it might prove?

XXII

HELPING OTHERS to HELP THEMSELVES

WITH this object in view a small co-operative store was started at a place in Labrador called Red Bay, the fishermen themselves putting in what cash they could scrape together in five-dollar shares. This store has been in operation now for nearly ten years. It has done a great deal to render the neighbouring fishermen independent. It has cheapened very materially the prices of goods, especially the main articles of consumption, such as salt, flour, butter, tea, and pork. It has not accomplished all it might have done, if a business man had been there to manage it; but it is still a decided success, and the managers, almost illiterate fishermen, have learnt a great deal from it. The opinion of the people there is, that were it not for the little cooperative store, they would have had to leave the place before this. During these years four other stores of the same kind have been established along the coast. These

are all in a sense affiliated, the same agent buying for all of them in St. Johns, and the same schooner, the *Cooperator*, which belongs to them, bringing them their supplies and carrying away their fish.

To keep the people going, however, without occasional dependence on credit, which is the same thing as charity here, it was evident that an increased capacity for earning was necessary, and that could only be acquired by getting work in the winter. The doctor therefore obtained from the Newfoundland government a timber area on special terms, to enable any one in need to get at least enough food for the time by hauling out logs for the mill, while it would afford labour as well to many who thus would be enabled to save against bad times.

At first, the mill did not prosper, as lumbering was entirely new to the doctor, who knew more of pills than mills, and yet was unable to import a manager, owing to the smallness of his capital. This however has been remedied now, and a flourishing little industry has sprung up relieving all the poverty in the district round. Over sixty families now live all winter where none lived before. Their children can go to the school

they have built there, and the people gather with ease for prayers on Sunday. Some have also developed a talent for schooner building, and they have already turned out two smart schooners.

Among those who have known most of Labrador, none is better known to the world than Lord Strathcona, the famous pioneer of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the High Commissioner for Canada, and the giver to the nation of the services of the Strathcona Horse. His knowledge of the conditions of life in Labrador led him to give the mission a smart little steamer, which was used to replace the sailing hospital-ship, while the launch was used to bring sick to and from the southern hospital.

This steamer was harboured in Labrador her third winter, and when the doctor, under whose care she was, went to look for her in the spring, she was nowhere to be found. He had grapples made, and dragged the harbour to see if she were sunk in the ice. Meanwhile she had gone on a long voyage by herself. While the great sealing steamers were at work in the heavy ice in the month of March, some of the men descried a spar sticking up out of one of the immense

pans of ice. On closer inspection they found that it was an imbedded steamer, and on careful examination they found it was the mission-steamer. She had gone to sea in the ice of her own accord, taking her anchors and chains with her. Oddly enough, too, the seals that the men were in search of were all around her, so much so, that a rumour got about that they were actually taking tea in her cabin. The steamer was cut out and towed to St. Johns, where she had to be condemned and sold for what she would fetch. Many good friends, however, rallied round the work, the value of which had made itself so plainly felt. Money was freely subscribed, the list being headed again by Lord Strathcona, after whom the new steamer is named. She is a smart steel ten-knot boat, with auxiliary sail power, that crossed the Atlantic in ten days. She has a splendid little hospital amidships, and is commanded by the doctor, who happens to be a master mariner.

A third hospital was added last year. It is on the south side of the straits of Belle Isle, and among a people who have no other possible means of getting skilled help. It is in a beau-



"A SPLENDID LITTLE HOSPITAL AMIDSHIPS"

tiful harbour called St. Anthony. A second steam-launch has also been given, which runs all summer to and from the most northern hospital.

Many other methods of preaching the gospel of love have also been adopted. A number of orphaned and crippled children have been taken and sent to new homes in Canada or the States. Many have been trained and sent out to earn a living as servants. Then again, small libraries have been started all along the coast. These are in shelved cases, and are moved on from place to place as they are read. A regular carpenter teaching-shop, with sloyd benches, has been started at St. Anthony Hospital, and a number of young lads have received regular teaching from a skilled carpenter. Ambulance lectures have been given, and a number have taken the certificate of capacity to render first aid to the wounded. Night schools, working classes, etc., are carried on by the sisters at the various hospitals in the long winter evenings; so that I have never visited them without finding them busy and cheerful. The gospel of cheerfulness and cleanliness and hope seemed to exhale from these

centres of work for our great Master, while the reason of it all is to be read as one enters Battle Harbour. For there, in letters a foot long, carved all across the face of the hospital so that he who runs may read, are these words:

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye did it unto Me."

This book may be kept

FOURTEEN DAYS

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